

What Is Progressive Education?

A BOOK FOR PARENTS AND OTHERS

by
Carleton Washburne

Parents and other citizens are disturbed about what is happening to their children in schools. The children are being taught in ways that differ from old ways. Critics warn of dangers. Professional school people have failed to make clear to many parents what they are trying to do and why. This book attempts to tell parents and other citizens what is being done or attempted in schools that are in step with scientific progress, with American democratic ideals, and with the problems of our turbulent times.

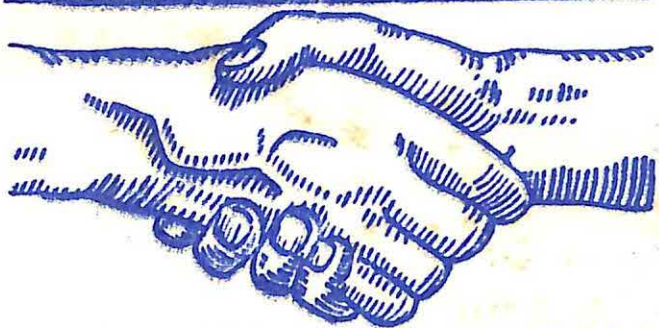
WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION?

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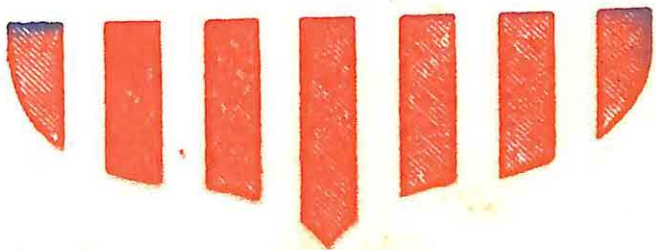
and citizens. He has felt their disquiet, their eagerness for facts. At the close of a recent meeting, a father rose and said to him: "Why don't you drop, for a moment, whatever else you are writing, and write a simple short book telling what you have been saying here — something we parents can buy for a couple of dollars or so, and read and understand? We need such a book." When Dr. Washburne got home, he talked with his wife and decided to do just that.

He has been uniquely privileged in knowing all aspects of the new education and all the important personalities involved. Part of his early schooling was under Col. Parker, whom John Dewey called "the father of progressive education." Dewey was a friend of his mother's and later of his. He has made official or semi-official studies of schools on every continent of the world. During the war the army put him in charge of the reopening and "de-fascizing" of the schools and universities of Italy. For the twenty-four years before the war,

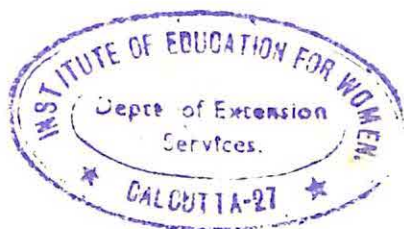
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



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by Carleton Washburne

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and of the Teacher Education Program
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Contents

Foreword. Why I Write This Book	7
Chapter 1. Try This Experiment	13
2. Science and Education	16
3. Obedient Subjects or Responsible Citizens?	35
4. Discipline	50
5. Character, Morals, and Religion	59
6. How It Started and What It's Like	73
7. Does It Work?	93
8. Why All the Shouting?	105
9. "What Can I Do for My Child?"	119
10. Contrasts with Traditional Education	143

Why I Write This Book

PARENTS and other citizens are disturbed about what the schools are doing to their children. The old familiar ways under which they got their schooling have changed—markedly in some places, a little almost everywhere. Even report cards are different. Many children learn to print instead of writing. They don't seem to learn multiplication tables. History and geography have dropped out and something called "social studies" has taken their place. Parents are often distressed by their children's poor spelling. Classrooms aren't as quiet as they remember them. Much of school life, especially in the early grades, seems like play.

High schools have changed less than elementary schools. But they, too, have "social studies," and the youngsters discuss all sorts of things that seem beyond their years. Sometimes they take sides on political and economic questions directly opposed to their parents! And there is talk about "life adjustment programs," "guidance counselors," and so on—things never heard of a generation ago.

And then one hears such violent criticisms of the new education that one feels insecure. Progressive schools are said to be "do as you please" schools. The lack of moral standards in sports, politics, and public life is blamed on this "newfangled education." Even juvenile delinquency and adult crime are laid at its door. And it

Why I Write This Book

is said at one moment that it allows unbridled freedom, at another that it is "collectivistic," permeated with communism and subversion.

While some citizens discount the extreme attacks, they are, nevertheless, disquieted by these accusations, because they don't quite know what "progressive education," "activity programs," and all such "modern" innovations really mean.

I have talked to many parent-teacher associations and other parent groups; to Rotary Clubs and other organizations of citizens. And I have felt their disquiet and their eagerness for facts. At the close of one such meeting last November, a father rose and said, "Why don't you drop, for a moment, whatever else you are writing, and write a simple, short book telling what you have been saying here—something we parents can buy for a couple of dollars or so, and read and understand? We need such a book."

When I got home and discussed the matter with my wife, we decided that I should do just that.

It happens that I have been uniquely privileged in knowing all aspects of the movement and all the important personalities involved. Part of my early schooling, before the turn of the century, was under Colonel Parker whom John Dewey called "the father of progressive education"; and part of it was in the public schools of Chicago, Elkhart (Indiana), and Elgin (Illinois). Dewey was a friend of my mother's, and later of mine. I made a study, 'way back in 1922, of the "New Schools" in Europe, reporting to the United States Office of Education. Under a Rosenwald Fund grant I studied the aims of education in Asia and Europe in 1931-2. In 1941, I had charge of the survey of the

Why I Write This Book

schools of Louisiana for the state legislature there, and the next year I studied the problems of education in five South American republics for our Department of State. During the war I accepted a commission from the army and was put in charge of the reopening and "de-fascizing" of the schools and universities of Italy.* Later, I took an active part in combating Communism in Italy as a Public Affairs Officer of the United States Department of State.

For the twenty-four years before the war I was superintendent of schools in a suburb of Chicago. I have visited schools and talked with leading educators on all six continents.

Educational research has been a continuing interest of mine—at every step I have wanted to get scientific answers to the questions that beset education. So I have been active in the American Educational Research Association, giving reports on scientific investigations at about twenty annual meetings. And twice I have been chairman, and a number of other times contributor, for the Yearbooks of the National Society for the Study of Education. For four years I was president of the Progressive Education Association in this country. And at present I am international president of the New Education Fellowship, with branches in more than thirty countries of the world.

If anyone knows what "modern" or "progressive" education really is, I ought to. So I felt an obligation to accept the assignment given by a father at a parents' meeting in a school. Here is the book he asked for.

New York, March, 1952

CARLETON WASHBURN

* Editor's Note: For his war work Dr. Washburne was awarded the Legion of Merit medal.

What Is Progressive Education?

Chapter 1

Try This Experiment

HERE is a very simple experiment that will illustrate an important aspect of the newer kinds of education. Try it.

Look at the following sentence carefully; then look up from the book and see if you can repeat it accurately, word for word.

"I would really like to know just what progressive education is."

Now try this one.

"Shim landy mo witchy waugon, tonga shinga hong squiddy waw boo."

How many times did you have to read the first sentence to memorize it? How many times did you have to read the second to be able to repeat it accurately?

Why is the first sentence so much easier? The second has no more syllables. It has no more difficult sounds. Yet if you really learned the second one, after repeated efforts, you will probably have forgotten it tomorrow—and you won't care if you do.

The difference is obvious. In the first sentence you have a meaningful whole. Your personal experience makes it say something you understand. The parts all hang together; they are not a mere series of words. You

What Is Progressive Education?

learn it almost without conscious effort, and it stays with you. The second seems to you a mere, unrelated jumble of nonsense. You can learn it if you have to, and with enough reviews you can master it. But why?

Much of the old subject matter of the schools—not all of it—was “shim landy mo witchy waugon” to the children who tried to learn it. $9 \times 6 = 54$, to the average eight-year-old, is a meaningless group of symbols. “To divide one fraction by another, invert the divisor, and multiply” is equally meaningless and useless to the average ten-year-old. “An adverb is a word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb” means little or nothing in the lives of most twelve-year-olds.

The key to the new education lies in the first sentence of the experiment. Children learn things that have meaning for them. They base their learning on experience. The different parts of what they learn have relation to each other. Children have an inborn, natural desire to learn—the same sort of desire that is making you read this book.

No one is forcing you to read this. And if, under penalty, you had to read it you would start out with an attitude of antagonism. You are reading it because your own experience, and the experience of others that has been communicated to you, leads you to want to know what the newer kind of education is all about. You know that you can think and act more intelligently if you know the facts. So you are willing to expend a reasonable amount of time and effort to get the knowledge which will be useful to you.

The same is true for children. They want *lots* of knowledge—look at the number of questions they ask. But they want knowledge that they can somehow use,

Try This Experiment

in their work or play or understanding of the world around them.

The newer education attempts to capitalize on this natural appetite for learning. It whets the appetite through experience and activities which will make the learning meaningful and desirable. It recognizes that school is only a focal point in education, and that the child has far more experience and learns far more at home and in the community than in school. Instead of shutting out the world outside, it takes the child into it, and draws it into the school.

But a child is a very complex organism. And no two children are alike. What experience is this particular child ready for? What are his needs? What is society demanding of him, and what will be his role in his family, his community, his country, and the world at large? How can he live most effectively as a child and develop most effectively as a person and as a contributing member of a society in which we all depend on each other vastly more than we realize? To answer these questions adequately we need all the scientific information and research we can get. So our next chapter deals with the role of science in education today.

Chapter 2

Science and Education

UNTIL a little over fifty years ago, science played almost no part in showing what we should teach or how we should teach or whether our teaching bore the fruit we desired. Even today much of education is unscientific, proceeding by tradition and pious hopes, with little regard for what science can contribute to an understanding of how human beings develop and learn.

Yet different sciences—especially those that deal with human beings—have real light to throw on the problems of education. Let us look at a few examples.

Physiology is a science that deals with the way the body functions. About forty years ago, a physiologist named Sherrington performed a number of experiments which showed that the nervous system acts as a whole, and that all parts of the body react to every stimulus. While you are reading this page, it is not just your eyes that are working. Nor are there merely some ideas or impressions going into one part of your brain. Unknown to you, there are little twitches that can be measured, in your tongue and vocal cords, as you read. They are making gestures toward saying the words. Muscles move your eyes across the line. Other muscles hold you in position, and shift your position to relieve strain and pressure.

The rate of your breathing and heartbeat, the very progress of digestion, are affected by what you are doing.

In your brain you are not merely receiving impressions. You are reacting to them. All sorts of associations are going on, relating the words you see to experiences you have had. Certain words may arouse emotions and affect the glands in different parts of your body. These actually, and measurably, change the chemistry of your blood.

No, it is not just your eyes that read—it is your whole body. You act as a complete organism. Your reactions depend on the past experiences that your organism has had. This same book, placed in front of a person who could only read Turkish, would have little effect on him beyond the awareness that here was something incomprehensible, printed in black on white.

Sherrington's experiments and those that followed showed that in educating a person we must have in mind the *whole* person; that intellectual education, isolated, is an impossibility. The person's body, his past experiences, his emotions, are all parts of one whole. That's why modern educators speak of "education of the whole child." They consider not only a specific learning, but all the attitudes and understandings that go with it. This is the only kind of education that is real.

Pediatrics and medical science contribute to our knowledge of this fact. Doctors find, not by the controlled laboratory experiments of the physiologist, but by the study of their patients, that mind, emotions, and body are all parts of the whole person, inseparable from each other during mortal life. There has grown up in recent years a whole field known as "psychosomatic"

What Is Progressive Education?

medicine—literally, mind-body medicine. Gastric ulcers are real things, actual sores in the stomach lining. But they come from mental and emotional causes, from worry, fear, and mental strain. A skin rash, indigestion, and countless other physical ailments, may have their origin in mental and emotional states. And in reverse, physical conditions affect mental and emotional conditions. Too much or too little juice from the thyroid gland can intensify or diminish mental as well as physical activity. Clogged bowels can make a person sluggish and depressed.

So medical science bears out what its parent, physiology, has shown—that you always and necessarily are dealing with a *whole* human being, not with just part of him.

I always remember what my friend the late Dr. C. A. Aldrich of the Mayo Clinics, once said to me, "We have found that if a baby is very sick it has a better chance of recovery with its mother in even a poor and insanitary home than in the best equipped, scrupulously clean hospital." The sense of love, of belonging to someone, of being at home, even to a little baby, has a potent effect on the whole organism—so great that it can sometimes fight off the disease that threatens its life.

That's why progressive schools try to give children a sense of at-homeness in their classrooms, why good teachers try to establish a bond of warmth and affection with their children. We know that just as this feeling makes for bodily health, so it makes for mental health. And a healthy organism naturally develops and learns more effectively than an unhealthy one.

Psychiatry is a branch of medical science. It deals with those whose symptoms are mainly mental, nervous,

or emotional; or those whose bodily symptoms have their origin not in bodily damage from accident, germs, or bad food, but from harmful mental and emotional reactions to experience.

Psychiatrists have thrown a great deal of light on education. They have found, for example, that most of the serious faults of children are the result of misguided efforts of the children to get what they really need in order to develop.

Every child—every person—needs a chance to express himself. We are all different. Each of us has what Colonel Parker used to call a “design of growth,” and modern psychologists call a “development pattern.” That is, we start different at birth and then have all sorts of different experiences and different reactions to our experiences. Consequently, each of us is a unique personality. Our whole nature makes us want to develop our special abilities, follow up our special interests. We want to be *ourselves*.

Now when we are frustrated in our natural development, we seek new ways of expressing ourselves. When we are blocked by physical obstacles, we have little difficulty in accepting a substitute that is attainable. For example: My two-year-old grandchild watched her father shovel coal into the automatic stoker of their furnace the other day, and wanted to do the same. She struggled futilely with the big shovel, then joyfully accepted a little shovel in its place. But if over and over, whichever way we turn, we find ourselves frustrated, and especially if we are made afraid and ashamed while we are blocked, we find subtle, devious ways, pushed down out of our consciousness by shame or fear, for getting what we need.

What Is Progressive Education?

Psychiatrists have found that most delinquency and insanity come from this sort of beginning. And the lesser symptoms of bad adjustment—laziness, bullying, showing off, lying, excessive teasing, abnormal concern with sex, as well as physical symptoms, can very often be traced back to the failure of the child to find wholesome or acceptable ways of getting what his growing organism needs.

The progressive school therefore provides as many opportunities as possible for the growing child to satisfy his needs and express himself, in ways that will not interfere with other people or with other needs of his own. Neither the teacher nor the child himself can discover the child's interests and special strengths and weaknesses, and his own unique pattern of needs, unless opportunity is given for a considerable degree of free activity and expression. This same freedom provides a guided and wholesome outlet for energies which, when over-repressed, produce the evils psychiatry has so often found.

A second fact that psychiatry has revealed bears out the example given by pediatrics—everyone needs "security." By this is meant a *feeling* of being loved and cherished, a feeling of belonging, a feeling of being at home in a situation, a feeling of courage and self-confidence. Because we all need this, we all seek it. If we fail to get it in our homes and schools, as children, we unconsciously try to achieve it by various means which we ourselves don't recognize and which sometimes are injurious to ourselves and others, like drink or drugs, or showing off. Alfred Adler of Vienna, early in the century, laid much stress on this point. He showed, for example, how a person whose smallness of

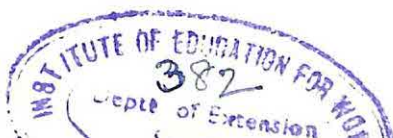
size made him feel inferior, often tried to make up for it by boastfulness, by flashy clothes, or cockiness, or bossiness. Or sometimes he just gave up and lost all courage and confidence. In either case he had an "inferiority complex." It is not just physical "inferiority," however, that causes the lack of a sense of security. More often it is a result of feeling unwanted or rejected, or unable to live up to what is expected of one.

The progressive school tries to give children and youth a sense of security. It tries to make their classrooms comfortable and homelike. It tries to encourage rather than to discourage them. The teacher tries to make them realize that he or she is genuinely interested in them, really cares about each one individually. And the teacher tries to give the child or student work that is within his reach, work where he can, with reasonable effort, succeed. Since the abilities of the youngsters in any class vary greatly, the teacher varies the work to fit the different abilities.

That's why report cards to parents, in the best schools, avoid competitive grades. You don't shame a young child because he cannot run as fast or throw as far as an older one, nor a person who does not have a good singing voice because he cannot sing as well as a concert singer.

The differences among the abilities and stages of growth in any classroom are very great. Any form of grading that shames the child who is less able or less mature in any particular aspect of this work than other members of the class is unfair and discouraging, and takes away his sense of security. Each child must be appraised in terms of how well he achieves goals that are within *his* reach.

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What Is Progressive Education?

A third contribution of psychiatry—and also one from the field of sociology and anthropology—is the sharper recognition of the fact that man is a social creature. Few human beings can live satisfying lives isolated from their fellows. We need to work and play, think and act, co-operatively with our fellows. We need to find common purposes, and work together toward achieving them. This need can be called the need for “social integration.” It is at the heart of all forms of human association—clubs, gangs, churches, political parties, cities, nations, world organizations. When the purposes of the group are harmful to other groups, the results of the association are bad. When the purposes are broadened to adjust to those of others and to harmonize with the purposes of more and more inclusive social organizations, the results are good.

The school, therefore, is very much concerned with helping children to think and work co-operatively toward goals that are at least harmless to others, and at best will tie in with the goals of larger and larger numbers of people. The ideal is to make the broader purposes of any social grouping harmonious with the purpose of world-wide well-being.

Consequently, the progressive school tries to help children and youth to learn to adjust to each other and the world around them. It tries to give them training in co-operative thinking and working. It tries to guide their self-expression into channels that will not stand in the way of the purposes of the group or the larger society, but that will contribute a share toward them.

Sociology and anthropology also show that each of us is very much a product of the “culture” in which we are brought up. They use the word “culture” to mean

all the traditions, habits, and ideas as to what is good or desirable, that make a tribe or a neighborhood or a country distinct from another. If we want to live satisfactorily in our culture, yet not be too severely limited by it, and if we want to do our share in improving it, we must understand it and we must see it in relation to others.

So modern schools, like traditional ones, pass on to the younger generation many essential features of the culture in which they are—its knowledge, its traditions, its values, and its tastes. But the modern school tries to make this understanding of the culture more real and more deep than the traditional school did. It tries to make the children and youth more conscious of what the culture means, and more aware of other cultures.

It therefore takes the youngsters out into the community, to see how people live and work and play together, and back in the classroom it helps them analyze what they have seen. It brings people from the community into the school to explain their work or life to the pupils. It makes use of people in the community who come from different cultures, to explain those to the youngsters. And it makes much use of "audio-visual aids"—motion pictures, "film strips" (still pictures projected from motion-picture reels), radio, television, posters, pictures of all kinds. Through these, things too far away to be visited directly can be made real and vivid to the children. And of course the progressive school uses books, many books, magazines, newspapers, and the spoken words of the teacher and the children themselves.

Knowledge and understanding are essential to effective living in any culture. The achievement of knowl-

What Is Progressive Education?

edge and understanding is therefore one of the major purposes of children going to school. And here is where the science of psychology comes in.

Psychology wasn't a science until about ninety years ago. It was a branch of philosophy and was largely speculative. Then Wundt and Fechner in Germany, and a little later William James in this country, who had studied with them, began to use the methods of science in finding out how the brain and nervous system work. They began to study how our eyes and ears and taste buds and the nerve endings in our noses and skins and muscles, receive impressions from the world around us and from our own movements, how these impressions are related to each other in our brains, how past impressions are brought into relation with new ones, how all the impressions get translated into thoughts and feelings and actions. Then psychology became a science.

Almost immediately psychology, as a science, began to throw light on education, which, until then, had been a craft, and at best an art, but which had no basis in science. So much has been contributed by psychology, that only a few samples can be given here.

One of the first ideas that psychological science exploded was one that the old speculative psychology had spread—the idea that man's brain was made of a number of "faculties": memory, logic, concentration, and so on, and that education consisted largely in training these faculties.

Psychology has completely disproved this notion. There is no "faculty" of memory. We remember those things that make a strong impression and those things that are closely associated with past and present experi-

ences. There are many ways by which we can increase the likelihood of our remembering different kinds of things: there is a technique of memorizing a poem and we can learn to use that technique for that purpose, but it won't help us to remember to mail a letter. There is a technique of associating a person's face or other aspects of his personality with his name. We can acquire that skill, but it won't help much in remembering stock quotations. Yet this much we can say in general: the more we are interested in something, the more wholly we throw ourselves into it, emotionally as well as intellectually, and the more it can be tied in with experience and past learning, the better we remember it. "Shim landy mo witchy waugon" was hard to learn because it lacked all these factors.

Similarly, there is no "faculty" of logic. A scientist who reasons very logically in relation to his scientific data may throw his scientific training to the wind in his politics or religion. A highly skilled mathematician may be quite illogical in his dealings with his wife or children. Einstein is probably the greatest thinker of today, but no one suggests that he be Secretary of State. We do not select the world's champion chess player to lead our armies, in spite of his skill in the strategy and logic of chess. We can learn to apply various techniques of reasoning and deduction to appropriate situations, but we learn those by applying them directly in many diverse and appropriate situations, not by solving many mathematical problems—or playing many games of chess.

Concentration is important, but we have no "faculty" of concentration. I remember when my son was not concentrating on his school work and was the despair of his teachers, yet concentrated amazingly on the problem of

What Is Progressive Education?

raising chickens, or taking an old Ford apart and then making it run, or developing artistic photography as a hobby. We concentrate in spite of ourselves when we are really interested, while we destroy concentration by making a conscious effort to concentrate. We can, it is true, set the stage for concentration—by solitude, quiet, removal of discomfort, and recognition of our desire to accomplish certain results. But we can't develop the "faculty" of concentration, because there is no such animal.

In our everyday life, we recognize these facts. But we were so indoctrinated with the idea of "disciplining the mind" by our teachers and parents, that in regard to school learning we still think in those terms. Even today many teachers of geometry, ignoring all the scientific and common sense evidence against them, tell their students that solving problems in geometry will make them think logically; teachers of Latin often try to make children believe that Latin will make them think more clearly.

The school that tries to apply the science of psychology to its methods discards the "faculty" psychology, lock, stock, and barrel. It helps children remember the things they need to remember by giving them experiences that will make the learning meaningful and desirable. It helps them think logically by making them face problems—problems of as many different kinds as possible, problems related to their lives and interests. It helps them to learn the techniques of assembling facts, examining presuppositions, seeing relationships, organizing their material, and reaching conclusions with enough tentativeness to be ready quickly to modify

them in the presence of new facts, yet with enough definiteness to lead to action when action is needed.

Let's take one or two more examples of how psychology has affected what is done in good schools. There are whole books on the psychology of learning.

We know now that people learn best when they learn in large units that have meaning for them, as you saw by the simple experiment in the first chapter. Therefore the whole method of teaching beginners to read has been reversed. Instead of children beginning, as they once did, by learning their ABC's, then learning syllables, then learning short words, then putting these together into sentences, children now, with *much* better results, begin the other way around. They first have some sort of experience, feeding a pet or walking to the fire-engine house, or what not. Then they talk about what they have done and dictate a few short sentences about it to the teacher who puts the sentences on the blackboard, or on a chart. Next they learn to recognize each sentence by itself. Then they see that the same word, perhaps "we," occurs in several sentences, and they learn to recognize that word. Little by little they build up a list of words that they can recognize at sight, whatever sentence they are in.

Now they are ready to see that certain groups of letters, representing sounds, are in several words they know: sing, bring, thing, wing, etc. "Ing" becomes familiar; and at about the same time they learn to see that the "s" sound is in sing, sit, soap, sill. And they learn to blend sounds, so that "s-ing" becomes "sing." Some children skip this stage and learn to give values to letters so that they can work out new words when

What Is Progressive Education?

they are in context, without much conscious analysis, without what teachers call "phonics."

The ABC's, as an arrangement of the letters in an alphabet, come much later. When children are ready to use the dictionary, to look up names in the telephone book, or use an index to find information, there is a *need* for knowing the order of the letters, and the learning of the alphabet in order makes sense and can be put to immediate use.

The same is true of multiplication tables. The old way was to memorize the tables first, and begin to use them to solve problems later. The way psychology has shown to be more effective is for children to have many experiences where they see the need for multiplying. First they may simply add the same number over and over; but when they have added 2 and 2 and 2 and 2, in connection with one experience after another, they begin to recognize that four 2's are always 8; and so on with other numbers. When the numbers have become meaningful to them and the process of multiplication is understood as a simpler way of putting numbers together, the facts of multiplication are easily learned. And by this time the children are having enough experiences with quantities of things so that they can put their knowledge to work in solving real problems.

That brings us to another of the innumerable contributions of psychology. It is found that learning is effective in proportion to its use. You can read about how to drive a car from now till kingdom come and still not be a safe person to put behind the steering wheel for the first time. You learn to drive by driving. As you are learning, the more understanding you have of what you are doing and why, the more intelligently

you will handle your car. But you don't start with theory. It is as we act what we learn that the learning becomes part of us.

The progressive school is sometimes called the "activity school," because it tries to apply this principle. There is activity in acquiring the experience that will make the learning have meaning; there is activity in trying to put it to use. The term "experience curriculum" is just another way of saying the same thing. We learn only what we live.

The science of education is primarily an application of the science of psychology. There is the same sort of relation between the two sciences that there is between physiology and medicine. Medicine leans heavily on pure physiological research, but carries on direct research of its own to solve specific problems. Similarly, education leans on psychology for basic research, yet carries on direct research of its own to solve practical problems.

The science of education is, naturally, younger than the science of psychology—about forty years younger, to be specific. It began, as all sciences must, by learning how to measure. Up to the turn of the century no one ever thought of seeing what things worked in education by applying reliable measurements to the results. There were always examinations, it is true, but they were like very elastic tape measures. I am seventy-four inches tall; but with an elastic tape measure I could stretch the yard to my full height and seem to be only three feet tall. About the year 1900, people like Stone and Ayres showed that most school examinations were like that, and they invented "standardized tests"—examinations that would give the same results no matter who gave

What Is Progressive Education?

them, and that would compare any school, anywhere, with any other school.

That was the first crude beginning of the science of education. Gradually, as with all sciences, the methods became more refined, the scope of the investigations broader.

Educational research has delved into most fields of education and there is little on which it does not shed at least some light, much as we still have to learn. Let me cite a couple of examples.

A psychologist, named Binet, and a psychiatrist, named Simon, worked together in France shortly after 1900, with the original intention of comparing dull or feeble-minded children with normal children. To do this they had to find out what most youngsters of six, seven, eight, or nine years—or more—are able to do in a variety of fields of activity. After a lot of experiments, they worked out a scale. A child who could do as many things on that scale as most eight-year-olds could do was said to have a mental age of eight. A child who could do what most ten-year-olds could do was said to have a mental age of ten; and so on.

By 1915 their work was well enough known among psychologists in this country so that Professor Terman at Stanford University adapted their scale to American children. He found that, other things being equal, a child who had a mental age younger than his actual age continued to develop mentally more slowly than other children, and vice versa. Terman then elaborated an idea that had previously been suggested, that one could express the relation of the mental age to the actual age in terms of per cent, and that this relation would, in most cases, tend to remain more or less constant. He

called it the Intelligence Quotient, which is generally abbreviated as "IQ." An IQ of 80 simply means that a child's mental age is 80 per cent of his real age. A ten-year-old child with an IQ of 80 would have a mental age of eight years. An IQ of 125 means that, at the time of the test at least, the child has a mental age which is 125 per cent of his real age. Thus a ten-year-old child with an IQ of 125 would have a mental age of twelve and one-half years, i.e., he would be able to do most of the intellectual things the average twelve-and-one-half-year-old can do.

Educational research seized upon these discoveries and ideas. One of the questions it asked itself was, "How much difference is there among children in a given grade of school," so far as their mental ages are concerned? And it found that teachers whose children were all about the same age, and who thought, therefore, that they were teaching children who were all more or less ready for the same assignment, really were teaching children who were as far as four years apart in their readiness to learn any particular lesson. It became obvious that giving the same assignment to all the children in a class was really as unfair, and inefficient, as giving the same assignment to children in four different grades. Schools which try to apply the knowledge science gives us, therefore, have to adapt their work to individual differences in the mental age and general readiness of the children in their classrooms. Few schools, as yet, have found ways of doing this as fully as they know it should be done. Because they partially fail to fit the work to each individual child, they often fail to give the degree of mastery of needed skills that is desirable and could be attained.

What Is Progressive Education?

The idea of mental age had another consequence. Educational research workers began asking themselves, for the first time scientifically, whether the things we give children to learn are given at the time when they can learn them best. Five hundred cities took part in a series of experiments stretching over fifteen years, to see which mental age was best for learning each of the various phases of arithmetic. These experiments showed that the schools had been way off the beam in many of their practices, often teaching some of the harder things before some of the easier ones, but especially trying to force certain steps of learning on children who were not yet ready for them.

By the simple act of postponing some of these parts of arithmetic until the children were a little older and more experienced, the schools made the learning not only pleasanter, but much more effective. In doing this they did not lose time—in the long run they gained time. The learning was more permanent and required fewer reviews; the children were more confident. All over the country textbooks were rewritten and courses of study changed, to comply, to at least a small degree, with the findings of this research. Long division, for example, is not now attempted in third or fourth grade as it used to be, but is more likely to be taught in the fifth grade or higher.

Actually educational science is being gradually applied to all school activities. When schools try to apply the findings of any of the sciences, it is necessary to check the result, to see if the new ways of education really are more effective. And more and more we are learning how to do this checking in an ever wider range of activities. It is now called "evaluation," rather

than measurement, to indicate the greater variety of approaches and the wider scope of the things measured.

Scientific research and scientific thinking are now the cornerstone of progressive education. But that does not mean that there was no progressive education before there was a science of education. Indeed, as we shall see in a later chapter, the movement goes back much further. Many things that science now proves were found out in practical experience long before there was systematic research. For instance, people knew many practical things about gravitation before Newton worked out its actual laws. Doctors, from the beginning of history, were able to help many people get well, long before there was a medical science. Yet medical science has been able to throw out false or useless practices of the past and to understand and develop the useful ones. Thousands of years ago the Egyptians and Hindus knew there were healing qualities in certain kinds of fungus and mold. But it was only in the past few years that we learned what it was in what kinds of mold that would cure what kinds of disease; and now we have a whole range of "miracle drugs" which are saving thousands of lives.

In the same way, there have always been good teachers, whose sympathetic understanding of children, whose common sense and personality, resulted in their using methods that today we call progressive or modern and which science has helped us to understand. As we gain in that understanding we can help more teachers to use the methods which were discovered by the best ones long ago. And we can avoid practices that were inefficient and that even harm children. Science does not result in throwing out everything that was old

What Is Progressive Education?

—hot water bottles have been used in medicine from time immemorial and are still used. But science separates out the really valuable practices of the past, analyzes them, and often improves upon them.

Progressive education today is simply education that attempts to apply in the education of children the findings of science, whether these confirm some old ways, or point to better and more effective ones, for helping boys and girls develop their potentialities, as individuals, and as contributing and responsible members of society.

Chapter 3

Obedient Subjects or Responsible Citizens?

THE following bit of history,¹ not well known, is full of meaning to us a hundred years later:

After the defeat at Jena in 1806 by Napoleon, Prussia determined to take itself in hand. As part of the effort, a deputation of young teachers were sent on Fichte's advice to study under Pestalozzi (1746-1827). At that time Pestalozzi was by all odds the foremost liberal educator in the world, aglow with the idea of helping the lower classes to improve their living. These young Prussians, fired with enthusiasm, came back to establish the new type of school. Acting on Pestalozzi's pattern, they developed schools in which the children were to understand what they were studying, to learn about life round them, and to use their own minds, to learn what they could use in their living. All this was in contrast to practice elsewhere—the customary memorization without understanding, the mere use of words, the verbalization of content with little or no meaning for life. Elementary schools, with teachers' seminaries (normal

¹ Kilpatrick, William H., *Philosophy of Education*, Macmillan Company, 1951, based on Paulsen, Friedrich, *German Education* (translated by Lorenz, Scribners).

What Is Progressive Education?

schools) to match the new point of view, were established to become models for the rest of the world. Our country and France were particularly impressed. Horace Mann (1796-1859) and others made reports on these Prussian schools, both elementary and normal, which greatly influenced educational development in our country.

The result in Prussia of this better type of *Volkschule*, along with other factors, was an eventual stirring of the people to the liberal Revolution of 1848, at first an apparent success but in the end a failure. When Frederick William IV with his army finally put down the Revolution, he called before him the masters of the teacher seminaries and told them explicitly: "You and you alone are to blame for all the misery which the last year (i.e., the Revolution of 1848) has brought upon Prussia. . . . This sham education, strutting about like a peacock, has always been odious to me." In remaking these normal schools he reduced everything "taught hitherto under the theory of education, didactics, anthropology, or psychology" to simple instruction in "school knowledge." "Christian knowledge" was similarly reduced to "Instruction in the Catechism," which was based on a "compendium fully containing everything the future teacher had to know, word for word." In other words, teachers were thenceforth not to be educated to think, nor were they to educate their pupils to think; for, as the king said, "The man who thinks too much is dangerous."

As we reflect upon this Revolution of 1848 and what might have come out of it, the words of Whittier come to mind:

Obedient Subjects or Responsible Citizens?

Of all sad words of tongue or pen

The saddest are these: "It might have been."

—*Maud Muller*, st. 53

It is indeed sad to contemplate how near in 1848 a liberal outlook came to controlling Prussia, and how, by comparison, out of that failure and reactionary victory came eventually Bismarck and the Prussian policy of war for national aggrandizement. For from these in the main, it seems fair to assert, resulted the wars of 1864, 1866, 1870, 1914, and 1939.

When Frederick William IV gave school education the whole blame (or credit!) for bringing about a desire for more democracy in Prussia, he of course oversimplified the causes. Yet there can be little doubt that educating people to think for themselves is a factor in bringing about a desire for democracy.

In our own country, until quite recently, our schools followed an uncertain course between encouraging boys and girls to think for themselves and discouraging such democratic procedures. Fortunately our whole history and government, the spirit of our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution with its Bill of Rights, and our tradition of a large degree of local self-government, counteracted much of the autocratic tendencies of the schools, and American citizens achieved at least a workable degree of democracy in many phases of their life.

The first world war, the war "to make the world safe for democracy," awoke us to the fact that autocratic and dictatorial governments were a threat to the democracy which was precious to us. The new dicta-

What Is Progressive Education?

torships which arose after that war—in Russia, then in Italy, then in Germany—made us again realize that democracy was in danger. The depression at home, growing out of the first world war, and then the coming of the second world war, made us concentrate more power in our central government than ever before, and made the need for thoughtful citizenship in every locality more imperative.

Now we find that just as the first war “to make the world safe for democracy” resulted in an increase in the dictatorships in the world, so the second world war left us with a still greater menace of world-wide autocracy. Increasing our military might and using it in victorious wars, in both cases were followed by an actual increase in the extent of autocracy in the world, not by an increase in the democracy for which we avowedly were fighting.

The way to combat autocracy is through strengthening democracy. The strengthening of democracy is a primary goal in progressive schools.

If you remember schools which you attended as a child (unless you were lucky enough to go to one of the early progressive schools), you will recognize that in their management, they were autocratic. The three basic commandments were, “Sit still, keep quiet, and do as you are told.” The school board or the superintendent, or in some cases the state, made out a course of study and selected textbooks. These were handed down to the principals, who in turn passed them down to the teachers. The number of minutes per day for each subject was carefully prescribed. The pages in the textbooks to be covered in each term were set down in black and white. The teacher made assignments to

Obedient Subjects or Responsible Citizens?

the children and gave some explanations; then the children studied what they were told to study and the next day recited their lessons to the teacher.

Under this system there was no possible opportunity for the practice of democracy. Records show that the bulk of the marks for bad deportment in school were for whispering and note passing. Communication among the children was the major thing to be guarded against. Teachers were judged by their ability to "keep discipline," by the ability of their children to "give back the subject matter they had learned," and by the teacher's "loyalty"—meaning obedience—to those of higher authority.

This was exactly the system used in the autocracies of Europe, where the deliberate purpose was to make children into obedient subjects.

It must be admitted that the more democratic countries of Europe, like our own, also used this same system of autocratic training. That democracy survived in spite of school training for autocracy, is merely an indication of the relative inefficiency of the schools in contrast with the effectiveness of the social factors at work in adult society and at home. Where the schools and the adult society were working hand in hand, as in Germany after 1848, truly obedient subjects resulted. Where the schools unconsciously worked for autocracy and the social and political system was democratic, as in the United States, the greater force of all the historical and social influences more than counteracted the subversion of democracy that was being practiced in the schools. But the democracy that survived was certainly an imperfect one. The indolence of many citizens, the lack of intelligent and thoughtful understanding of the

What Is Progressive Education?

major political, economic, and social issues, by the rank and file of people, the corruption that crept into government, the mediocrity of many of the people's representatives, the shortsightedness of many of our laws—all these well-known symptoms are evidence of the weakness of democratic training, the weakness of our education under the old system.

Progressive schools recognize that if, during the most formative period of their lives, young people experience autocracy and have no practice in democracy, they cannot be expected suddenly to become intelligent voters and co-operative citizens when they hit their twenty-first birthday.

Our best schools today, therefore, try to train young people for democracy by giving them practice in democracy. The children plan co-operatively with the teacher, and naturally with the teacher's guidance and help, what they are going to do, what they are going to study, how they are going to study it, what kind of order in the classroom is most conducive to their achieving their goals. Thinking, planning, and acting together is at the heart of democratic living.

Another central aspect of democracy is respect for the individual and recognition of the rights of minorities. Mere verbal repetition of such principles has little effect upon action. The progressive school, therefore, tries to develop these attitudes through practice. Each schoolroom in an American public school is a pretty fair cross section of races, nationalities, religions, economic and social conditions, and political affiliations. When children are given an opportunity to think and act together, to work and play co-operatively, there are innumerable opportunities for the teacher to guide

them to see the value of differences, the harmfulness of prejudices, the need for not merely tolerance but sympathetic understanding in relation to human beings of different backgrounds from one's own.

There are plenty of chances for children to see that democracy is not just a system of government, not just a counting of votes. Rather they learn to see that democracy consists of respect for individual human beings, for their own playmates, regardless of race, or sex, or religion, or national origin, or wealth. It consists of co-ordinating the activities of widely differing people toward the achievement of goals they hold in common; and it consists of allowing full freedom to individuals and minorities, except where the abuse of that freedom will restrict the freedom of others.

This kind of experience cannot be had in a silent classroom, where every child is independently studying an assignment handed down from above, where mutual help is forbidden, and where the only breaking of the silence is individual recitation of the lesson or explanation by the teacher. Children have to learn to use freedom without abusing it, through the practice of such freedom. They have to learn to gear their lives and activities into those of their fellows, through group activities and experiences. The progressive school is, therefore, one of activity rather than silent receptivity, one of co-operative effort rather than passive obedience.

There is another important aspect of democracy. Democracy can only work effectively if citizens are really thoughtful. Decisions made by a group or by a whole society will only be as good as the joint wisdom of the members. One does not get wisdom by merely receiving knowledge or indoctrination. Wisdom comes

What Is Progressive Education?

through thoughtful analysis of all the factors involved in a question, through interchanging ideas with people who differ in their interpretation of facts, through careful evaluation of facts, using the methods of logic and science, through developing one's own system of values, so that one can judge, at least tentatively, what things should be sacrificed in order to achieve better things.

Even very little children can learn through experience and a little guidance that one set of actions may have results that prevent them from achieving what they really want to achieve. For example, a child in the first grade can readily see that if he or his fellows continue a noisy activity in which they are having fun, they will not be able to hear an interesting story the teacher is going to read to them; that if they follow an impulse to dawdle and play while putting on their wraps, they will have less time for fun on the playground; that if one wants to be listened to quietly when telling an experience one has to be equally considerate when others are telling their experiences. And so on indefinitely.

From such simple beginnings in the earliest school years, children move on into broader issues. Their study of how man lives on earth (the social studies, including where people live, how they live, what their history has been) awakens them to some of the problems facing human beings in every society and in the world society. At home they are continually exposed to the family discussion of the issues of today. They hear on the radio and see on the television the controversies and problems of today. It is the function of a democratic school to help young people get from this miscellany of

Obedient Subjects or Responsible Citizens?

impressions, real education in thoughtful analysis and evaluation.

The progressive school encourages children, where they are mature enough to be interested and concerned with current problems, to bring the problems to the classroom. Such problems make the study of history and geography alive and real. They give the teacher the opportunity to help the children get the factual information necessary for a real understanding of the problems. They enable the teacher to help the youngsters see the difference between propaganda and honest information, to know the difference between prejudice and informed opinion, and to think honestly for themselves.

When I was a superintendent of schools, I had two complaints in the same week in regard to the same teacher of social studies in the junior high school. One of them came from a high official of one of Chicago's largest banks.

The banker said to me, "That teacher of social studies is giving my son all sorts of radical notions. I won't have my son propagandized for things I don't believe in!"

"Won't you be specific?" I asked.

"I certainly will. Jim came home last night and at the dinner table he began talking about labor unions and what they had done for improving the standard of living of American labor. Now, my father was a strikebreaker in the big Pullman strike in the 1890's, and my son has been brought up to see the corruption and abuses inherent in trade unionism. I am not going to have him taught in school that unions are the lily white saviors of the working man."

What Is Progressive Education?

The other complaint came from a woman, an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers. She said, "That social studies teacher of yours is undermining all the education I have given my daughter. Last night at dinner she was arguing about the abuses of power by some of our unions. She was talking about racketeering in the unions, about how labor leaders seized control of a union and used it for their own private power and benefit. She is being filled full of capitalistic propaganda, and I won't have it! All her life she has been brought up with good labor psychology and a sound point of view as to the importance of organized labor for the welfare of the working people. Now she comes home with all this chitter chatter parroting the vicious views of the people who want to exploit the working class."

These two children were in the same class under the same teacher. It was fortunate for me that the two complaints came almost simultaneously. I had naturally told each parent I would investigate the matter and report back. By the time that I did this, I was able to tell each one about the other, and to point out that if the family was showing only one side of a question, and if the children were thinking honestly for themselves, they would naturally take the opposite point of view from what seemed to them a parental prejudice. That two such able parents could have two such different attitudes toward organized labor was in itself evidence that there were live controversial issues in regard to the labor movement. If their children were going to be able to meet these issues honestly, they must know all sides of the question, must be free to do

independent thinking, and must be guided to careful factual research.

Later the children in this same junior high school were taking advantage of the imminent presidential election to have a mock election in school. They arranged to have speakers in the school assembly to present the Republican point of view, the Democratic point of view, and the Socialist point of view. The father of one of the children was a big industrialist. He asked me to have lunch with him. Toward the end of the lunch he said the following:

"Carleton, you're carrying things too far. I suppose it's all right for the kids to have a mock election and to hear something about the point of view of the Democrats as well as the Republicans. They're hearing such questions argued all the time and they might as well get the thing out in the open. But I draw the line at including the Socialist candidate. After all, socialism is not just another political party. It involves a whole change in our social and economic life. It is sheer radicalism. To put it on a par with our other political parties is nonsense. You have no right to subject our children to that sort of vicious propaganda."

I answered him somewhat as follows:

"You believe your side in regard to all such matters is right, don't you? And you believe that if a person were really thoughtful and really had the facts, he would come to the same conclusions you do. Wouldn't you rather have your own child reach these conclusions through honest thinking and through honest investigation than merely to accept them because they are yours? Don't you think he will be much stronger in his

What Is Progressive Education?

convictions if they have been honestly arrived at by him after hearing all sides?

"Now you must admit that since there are people whose points of view don't agree entirely with your own, there is just the least little chance, perhaps one chance out of a hundred or one chance out of a thousand, that you might be wrong in some aspect of your opinion. Naturally, if you thought that you were, you would change your opinion. But just on the hypothesis that conceivably you might be wrong some place, wouldn't you want to avoid perpetuating your error?

"Now all we are trying to do is to help your child and all the other children, little by little, to look honestly and thoughtfully and analytically at all sides of controversial issues. They have got to face these issues when they get out into adult life. The more practice they have while they are growing up, the better prepared they will be to take their part as intelligent citizens. It is true that they are still young and that at first they may tend to come to halfbaked conclusions. That's where skillful teaching on our part is necessary. We have to help them to recognize the difference between a mature conclusion when time comes for action, and an open, inquiring mind until time for action.

"We're giving them practice in making up their own minds in regard to the things that are immediately pertinent in their school life. Because the school is organized democratically, there are countless times when they have to reach decisions for action in the light of such facts and such thought as they have had time for. But there are other issues which they are not going to have to face actively until later and yet which are all around them, in the newspapers, on the radio,

Obedient Subjects or Responsible Citizens?

around the family dinner table, where they either are going to absorb prejudice or learn to look for facts and to apply scientific thought. Surely you would rather have your youngster understand these issues, think about them, do the necessary study and fact gathering to be intelligent about them, than to be merely swayed by emotion or emulation of those he loves and respects."

People who accuse progressive schools of propaganda and indoctrination are really either completely ignorant of what the progressive school is trying to do, or desirous that the school should indulge in propaganda and indoctrination along the lines of their own convictions. Propaganda and indoctrination are the methods of autocracy. Democracy calls for frank, objective analysis of all sides of every live issue.

When I visited Russia in 1927, there was a curious admixture of democracy and propaganda in the schools. In regard to all immediate and local affairs, in regard to school discipline, in regard to school experiences, even in regard to what the children were going to study and how, the schools were amazingly democratic. On the other hand, indoctrination for communism was on every page of their textbooks, in every part of their course of study, and in all the organized activities.

By the time of the purges in the early 1930s, the incompatibility of democracy and indoctrination had become evident. The democratic practices in the schools were resulting in too much independent thinking on the part of the children. The youngsters could not be held in line by the indoctrination superimposed from above. There came about, therefore, an abrupt reversal of policy. The democratic elements of the school

What Is Progressive Education?

disappeared. The school curriculum was made formal and traditional. Obedience, "scholarship," and receptivity took the place of the progressive practices of the 1920's. The Soviet school system of today follows the traditional academic pattern into which indoctrination fits naturally and harmoniously. The children are being trained to be subjects of a totalitarian state.

Mussolini was not going to make this same mistake, of trying to democratize the schools. He appointed Gentile his minister of education, and Gentile swept out every vestige of progressive education, and laid his whole emphasis on "intellectual discipline," "culture," and blind obedience to Il Duce.

Hitler likewise abolished the progressive elements that had grown up in German education during the Weimar Republic. Advocates of progressivism either fled the country or found themselves in concentration camps. He did not even let abstract intellectualism remain in the schools, but made propaganda and indoctrination for Nazism the one big dominating influence.

Just at the close of the first world war, an international organization called the New Education Fellowship was formed to further progressive education in all parts of the world. By 1927, the International Conference in Locarno was attended by representatives of fifty-two countries—not however, by representatives from Russia, not by representatives from Mussolini's Italy. When Hitler came into power, the German section of the New Education Fellowship was immediately abolished. Today, there is no branch or section of the New Education Fellowship in any country behind the Iron Curtain, nor in Franco's Spain, nor in Perón's Argentina.

Obedient Subjects or Responsible Citizens?

Dictators know that progressive education is the most dangerous enemy of autocracy. They recognize what Frederick William IV recognized, and, like him, have abolished progressivism from their schools.

Progressive education is education for democracy.

Chapter 4

Discipline

How many times this week have you had to obey an order from someone in authority? If you drove a car, you probably had to obey a traffic officer, or the impersonal traffic light or no parking sign. If you are employed, you had to carry on your work within a framework of time, place, and the purpose of your occupation—a framework which you probably did not help to set up. If you are a mother living at home, you had to recognize the established framework of your husband's and children's work hours and school hours. Within certain limits you had to obey or conform.

But how much of your time was spent in doing just what some higher authority told you you *must* do?

If you will think back over the details of your day you will see that most of the time you had a wide range of freedom of choice. You disciplined yourself to do even the disagreeable things because *you* wanted to achieve results desirable to *you*.

Because some people are dear to you, what is good for them is part of your own good. Even a stranger whom you see suffering or in need may become enough a part of you, for the moment, so that helping him becomes part of your own desire. You are unhappy in the

presence of unhappiness; you have personal satisfaction in making others content or happy. So you discipline yourself to do many things which on the impulse of the moment you don't feel like doing, but which, all things considered—in the long view and the social view—you really want to do, more than you want to follow your immediate impulse.

This morning, for example, my alarm rang at 6:40. My impulse was to shut it off and go back to sleep. But instead, after shutting it off, and a bit of yawning and stretching, I got up. Why? No one told me to. But I had work to do and I had standards of punctuality I wanted to set in my office—for long range, desirable purposes. So I exercised self-discipline and got going.

If we look at our lives we find they are largely made up of such decisions. We have long range purposes—earning a living, saving for the future, supplying the needs or desires of those around us, satisfying our own recreational, intellectual, or physical needs. Seeing these purposes—our own enlarged purposes—we discipline ourselves to do whatever things we believe to be necessary to achieve them, whether they are pleasant in themselves or unpleasant.

Most of our activities, the overwhelming majority of them, are determined by this sort of self-discipline. Only a tiny percentage of our actions is regulated by some authority telling us that we *must* do a specific thing at a specific time in a specific way.

The discipline of the traditional school consisted largely of the second kind—the teacher in authority told the children exactly what they were to do, and how they were to do it, each period of the day. The discipline of the progressive school attempts to stimu-

What Is Progressive Education?

late and prepare for the discipline of life, self-discipline. It tries to help children see their own goals and to discipline themselves to accomplish them.

The army is supposed to be the prime example of authoritative discipline; and at times it does require implicit obedience. Yet when I served as an officer in the army during World War II, I found that the number of direct commands I received or gave was small in comparison with the great number of big and little decisions I had to make throughout each day—self-discipline was the dominant factor. And when it came to recommending enlisted men and officers under me for commendation, decoration, or promotion, it was those who had the most self-discipline, the most initiative, who gave “service beyond the line of duty,” who were given recognition.

A close friend of mine, Bob Allais, rose in the business world from packer in the shipping room at Sears Roebuck to manager of one of the large Sears retail stores. When he took the store over, it was losing money and was in a run-down condition. His first act was to take the employees into his confidence, advise, and plan with them, help them to see the dependence of salesgirls on buyers, the dependence of both on shipping room and drivers. He helped them to see that they were all bound together and that only by working together for the good of the whole store could any of them prosper. He got their ideas and advice, and acted on them. The good of the store became their goal, and they disciplined themselves to reach this goal. Within two years the store became one of the most profitable of Sears' retail chain, with happy, co-operative employees. Since Bob's death, his son is carrying on, in another store of the

chain, rapidly moving upward because of his skill in helping personnel to become self-disciplined for the good of the whole.

Business and industry recognize self-discipline as vastly superior to mere obedience to authority.

It is because progressive teachers, too, recognize this fact that their stress is on self-discipline, and the exercise of authority is kept to a minimum. Yet authoritative discipline is sometimes essential for the protection of the rights of others; it is sometimes needed to protect the lives of the individuals who are asked to obey—a teacher taking a group on a trip must have obedience, lest children get run over or lost. In emergencies, instant obedience is necessary. And there are certain general rules or laws which must be obeyed.

I remember one day, for instance, when I was a superintendent of schools, and had my office in the junior high school building, a delegation of three boys from a class for children of slow mental development stormed into my office. They had by-passed the principal and had come direct to headquarters.

"Mr. Berglund isn't democratic!" they burst out.

"What's the matter? What happened?" I asked

"Our class voted unanimously that we should have a holiday tomorrow, and he says we can't!" they exploded.

"How did Mr. Berglund come to be your teacher?" I asked.

"You appointed him."

"And how did I get to be superintendent?"

One boy knew. "The school board appointed you."

"And how was the school board chosen?"

"I guess they were elected," came the answer.

What Is Progressive Education?

"Was that democratic?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Now we have laws in this state. One of them says that all children must go to school every school day until they are sixteen. Who made those laws?"

"The legislature."

"And how was the legislature chosen?"

"It's elected."

"Right. And isn't that democratic? When the people choose a legislature to make laws, and choose a school board to appoint teachers to carry out some of those laws, is a teacher undemocratic if he tells you that you must obey those laws?"

"N-no, I guess not."

"How old are you boys?"

"Fourteen." "Fifteen." "Fifteen."

"Can any of you drive a car?"

"I can," one answered.

"All right. Suppose you and four other boys were driving down Elm Street, and the traffic officer at Linden Avenue raised his hand and told you to stop. Then suppose you took a vote and unanimously decided that you should go ahead without waiting for the signal. Could you do it?"

At this the boys laughed. They saw the point and returned to their class.

Children in a progressive school as well as in a traditional one have to learn to obey laws and persons in authority—including their teachers.

But since most of life consists of self-discipline, not of obedience to authority, most of the activities of the progressive school are carried on by mutual planning and co-operation, rather than by command. Youngsters

are helped to see their own goals and to work toward them, rather than commanded to do set tasks. The teacher plays a vital part in helping youngsters to look ahead, to see the need for some things that might not at first seem useful, by guiding them to find the most effective ways of achieving their larger ends, and by helping them to be aware of the rights and needs and desires of their fellows and the community. Commands are reserved for those relatively infrequent occasions when implicit obedience is really necessary, as in our own lives as adults.

The classroom in a progressive school may seem noisy at times—people don't learn to plan and work together by maintaining silence. And if children are to be brought to see for themselves the need for order, they must have a chance to experience the harmful effects of disorder. Self-discipline rests on freedom to make choices. And freedom includes the right to make mistakes, and learn from them. It is the teacher's job to help children to interpret their experience, to learn from both their right and their wrong choices.

A visitor to a school on a given day may see only one part of the process and may think that an experience children are having is just an example of poor discipline. Yet, if the teacher is really carrying out the principles of progressive education, the same visitor would find that out of the seeming disorder, during the next few days, the children were reaching an understanding and a self-discipline that were eminently desirable.

The teacher in the fourth grade of a progressive public school was ill one morning and telephoned the office of the principal that she would be absent. The person who took the message failed to transmit it to

What Is Progressive Education?

the principal when he came in. So the children found themselves in the classroom with no teacher. One volunteered to report the situation to the principal, but another said, "Why bother? We know what we have to do better than any substitute will know it. Let's get along without any teacher."

The idea met instant response from the rest, and the children went ahead with the work of the day. They had a class chairman; they helped plan their own work beforehand; they knew the daily routine—when to go to playground, when to dismiss at noon, etc.

During the course of the day the principal dropped into the room. Seeing all the children at work and in good order he assumed that the teacher had just stepped out for a moment, and he went on his way. A supervisor also stopped to see the teacher and found everything so normal that she took it for granted that the teacher was only momentarily out of the room. It was not until the teacher returned the next day when the children told her with glee what they had done and showed her the work they had accomplished, that the mistake in the principal's office was discovered.

That is the kind of discipline—real self-discipline that requires no overseeing authority for its enforcement—that progressive schools strive toward. It is the kind of discipline we value in a democratic society. It can only be achieved in a democratically run school.

In Chapter Two, I mentioned self-expression as one of the needs of all people, as shown by the research of psychiatry. Each of us is different from anyone else in his design of growth, in his skills and needs and interests. The progress of the human race comes from those differences, just as biological evolution comes

from the law of variation. The traditional school gives almost no scope to individual creativeness and initiative. Most of the time all children are studying the same lessons from the same books and reciting back to the teacher the same facts. The progressive school, on the other hand, attempts to give full development to all of the child's possibilities. This can only be done if there is a considerable amount of freedom.

Yet self-expression itself involves discipline as well as freedom. One cannot paint a picture that is satisfying without disciplining oneself in the handling of brush and color and mastering certain techniques. One cannot write a story or poem without disciplining oneself in the handling of pencil and paper and the use of words. Any form of craft, any study of a topic of special interest, calls for discipline. Even the playing of a game requires disciplining oneself in the rules and in the acquisition of skills. *One does not achieve real self-expression without continuous self-discipline to make the form of expression conform to the creative idea. While authoritative discipline blocks creativity and initiative, self-discipline makes them effective.*

In a progressive classroom, then, there is far more freedom than in a traditional one. There must be if the children are to grow in self-discipline and develop their own initiative, creativity, and responsibility. While the teacher's main functions are leadership, encouragement, and guidance, he or she must also be recognized as a person in authority, responsible for the protection of the children, for carrying out laws and school rules, for safeguarding the rights of other children and classes. Authority is used when it is required for these purposes, and children must learn to obey when authority is

What Is Progressive Education?

exercised. But the progressive teacher knows that authority should only be used when really necessary. The best discipline is that imposed on each child by himself, because he recognizes that only through such self-discipline can he effectively accomplish his own larger purposes—for his own long range good and the good of his fellows.

Chapter 5

Character, Morals, and Religion

WHEN my son, Chandler, was not quite five, I took him with me to spend Christmas with my mother in California. When he saw grapefruit growing on a tree right in his grandmother's back yard, he asked if he could take one home with him to show to his little chum, Gordon, next door. Repeatedly, he talked about sharing his experiences with Gordon.

On the train going home a man sitting opposite made friends with the little, rather shy boy, and after each meal in the diner offered him a chocolate peppermint from a long narrow box—and there was no candy Channy liked better. The man got off the train a day earlier than we. When he was saying good-by, he gave Channy the box of chocolate peppermints, still a third full.

Channy's eyes sparkled. He looked up at me, saying, "Me and Gordy are going to have a party when I get home!"

He resolutely put the lid back on the box, after looking at the chocolates, and asked me to keep the box for him. After the next meal in the diner, he asked me for the box. I gave it to him, thinking "Oh, oh! here

What Is Progressive Education?

go his good resolutions!" But I said nothing. The candy was his.

Channy took off the lid, looked at the candy, sniffed it, and then firmly put the lid back on, saying, "Gordy and me are going to have a party when I get home."

This performance was repeated, with variations, after each meal. Any stray crumbs were nibbled, little protruding edges were broken off, but the candy remained intact till we got home. And he and Gordy had a wonderful party, looking at the various souvenirs, eating the grapefruit and finishing off the chocolate peppermints.

This little incident illustrates the two dimensions of character, the two ways in which self-discipline makes for the good life. One dimension is farsightedness, the other is social-mindedness. Channy was able, even at that very young age, to look ahead and to see the greater satisfaction to be achieved by the sacrifice of the momentary impulse. And he was able to identify himself with others—in this case his closest friend—and to take satisfaction in giving happiness to that friend. The impulse to eat the candy was subordinated to a socialized happiness, rather than to a purely individual happiness.

Seeing this self-discipline, social-mindedness, and farsightedness in Channy when he was so young gave his mother and me a sense of sureness as to his future. He went through the usual difficulties and turmoils of a growing boy and an adolescent and caused us the usual parental concern—and sometimes annoyance and impatience. But down underneath we were confident that the essential traits of character which he had shown at that time, and which, of course, he showed many times subsequently, would triumph over all obstacles. As an

Character, Morals, and Religion

adult and a father himself, he has more than justified that confidence.

Progressive education has as one of its goals the development of character in this sense. I have already shown how through giving much freedom of choice, and the opportunity to learn through the mistakes of wrong choices, the progressive school encourages the development of the long range view and the subordinating of momentary impulses to long range desires. Children in the progressive school, with the help and guidance of the teacher, but not dominated by the teacher, plan much of their own work, most of their own activities. They know where they are going, understand the values of what they are trying to accomplish, and work to reach goals which have become their own. This is the kind of training that leads to real self-discipline, to real farsightedness.

Let us now turn to the development of social-mindedness—the ability to love one's neighbor as one's self, to identify one's own well-being with the well-being of one's fellows.

Social-mindedness, like farsightedness, is inherent in human nature. One finds it, to a greater or less degree, in primitive tribes from the Arctic to the South Seas; one finds it in all cultures and periods of history. Almost no one is completely without it. But the degree to which a person has social-mindedness as well as farsightedness, and the self-discipline to make them effective, is the measure of that person's character. The degree to which they are common, to which they are highly developed among many members of a society, is the measure of the real advancement of that society.

Social-mindedness is developed through co-operative

What Is Progressive Education?

thinking, and working toward the achievement of something desired by the group. Wherever a group of people are co-operating voluntarily to achieve a common purpose, some degree of social-mindedness emerges. Those who continuously and habitually participate in such co-operative undertakings develop social-mindedness as a part of their total personality.

Social-mindedness can be limited to a small group, a tribe, a clan, a gang, a clique, or to a religious, political, or economic segment of society. It may then be excellent within the confines of that group but be antagonistic toward other groups. Strong race feelings, bitter opposition between labor and management, and national wars are the all too prevalent illustrations of limited social-consciousness.

One has to learn that each group is a part of a more inclusive society. One has to extend one's social consciousness out to include the well-being of the whole. One has to recognize that the well-being of the whole is essential to the well-being of the part.

A family should have, and often does have, a strong sense of family loyalty and devotion. If that family sets itself up against the community, to exploit the community or to live in a way which is harmful to the community life, it limits both its own well-being and the well-being of the community. But if that family recognizes itself as a part of the community and co-operates in community enterprises, its own good is increased and it contributes to the good of the community.

In exactly the same way, the various social groupings within the community may each be good in themselves. If, however, they ignore each other's rights and desires, they destroy the wholesomeness of the community life,

Character, Morals, and Religion

and their own satisfactions are limited by the fact that they are part of a disrupted community rather than part of one which is working toward the common good.

Loyalty to a community does not mean disloyalty to one's state. If each community does not work toward the well-being of the state as a whole, the state itself will lack the strength and wholeness necessary to give each community its best opportunities for development.

The circle enlarges continuously until we see nations and groups of nations which, if they work for their selfish well-being at the expense of the rest of the world, plunge the world into disaster. When nations learn that they are a part of a world society, it will not mean that the individuals within the nations lose loyalty and devotion toward their own countries. It will mean that they want their own countries to work for the good of the whole so that all parts of the whole may attain the maximum good.

This isn't just an abstract philosophy, or a bit of Utopian idealism. In the world as it exists today it is a stark fact which we must all recognize lest we perish.

The progressive school tries to help children to see this interdependence of man. It begins with very young children by helping them plan and work and play co-operatively. As the children get older they take on larger group responsibilities, responsibilities for the entire school, responsibilities in community activities of various kinds. There are many co-operative enterprises in which the children assume full charge, in which they learn to work together toward common goals.

But that is not enough. The circle must be an ever widening one. Even very little children can see how many people contribute to their satisfactions. Kinder-

What Is Progressive Education?

garten children having their morning milk may be asked, "Where does this milk come from? Let's go see." A trip to a dairy can elicit the remark, "My, how many people have been working together to get this milk to us."

Since everything we eat or wear or use in our work or play comes to us as the result of the co-ordinated work of more people than any of us can count, the examples of man's interdependence are limitless.

The teacher of the progressive school takes advantage of this fact to awaken children more and more to this interdependence—this fact that in the world's good is our own and in our good is the world's. The minerals and metals alone that go into an automobile come from more than a score of countries. The machinery and materials used in each of those countries, the food and clothing of the workers in each of those countries, come from many more countries. The whole world is involved one way or another in the simplest of the things around us. Even a cup of coffee has necessitated many means of transportation, ships and trucks and trains, all sorts of buildings, all sorts of tools. No one can count the number of people who have participated in getting you your breakfast cup of coffee.

In the progressive school the children get out into the community, and they see the ways in which human beings co-ordinate their work. They see the role of the bank, the role of the store, the role of the factory. They see all the people in the community working together toward making recreation possible, toward beautification, toward providing for people's health. Under a teacher who is keenly conscious of what this interdependence means, the children learn more and more to

Character, Morals, and Religion

recognize how intimately their own good is bound up with the good of all.

There is a limit to the number of places children can visit physically, but there is no limit to the number of places and number of types of activity which they can see through motion pictures, slides, illustrations, posters, and so on. The world is brought into the progressive school through such visual aids. Under a skillful teacher, the children can see and feel the interdependence of man, the wholeness of the human race.

And of course the progressive school makes much use of social studies and literature. Social Studies is the name given to the study of history, geography, political science, and economics, treated together rather than separately. One still finds traditional schools in which the children will be studying the geography of South America while studying the history of a quite different part of the world, studying each merely as a series of facts to be remembered long enough to pass the examination. In the progressive school, on the other hand, the study of man on this earth recognizes that geography, economics, and political activity all affect the way human beings live together. One cannot study any period in history or any part of the world's geography without seeing the various forces simultaneously at work. Human beings live together in societies; so a study of human beings is a study of societies. The term "social studies" is used to describe this more comprehensive approach to learning about how people have lived in the past and how they are living at present in all parts of the world. The social studies are an essential part of the knowledge that the school is responsible for transmitting from one generation to another.

What Is Progressive Education?

When the social studies are approached realistically, they bring about an awareness of the interdependence of man. They show the need for world well-being, if we are to have national and local well-being.

Through the democratic organization and procedures of the progressive school, therefore, and through the social studies made real by excursions, by visual aids, and by literature, social-mindedness is developed in the children. They learn to identify their good with the good of the whole; and this is, as we have seen, one of the two essential dimensions of character.

The other essential dimension, farsightedness, is developed simultaneously, partly through the same means. As one sees one's own good tied up with that of others, one's farsighted desires are united with one's social desires.

The whole setup of the progressive school has this kind of character building as a main purpose. On the one hand, the recognition of the importance of mental hygiene and the application of the research findings of psychiatry result in trying to give children acceptable means of satisfying their own basic needs of self-expression, security, and social integration. On the other hand, the democratic organization, the freedom with responsibility and guidance, the habituating of children toward co-operative thinking and working toward common goals, and the use of field trips, visual aids, social studies, and literature, combine to give children a re-out the world. The progressive school develops in children farsightedness, social-mindedness, and the self-discipline to make these effective. This is education for character.

Character, Morals, and Religion

Morals, on the contrary, are merely the ways in which various social groups, cultures, or nations try to work out ways of living together effectively. Morals differ from one country to another, one culture to another. The morals in our country, for example, oppose one kind of lies but accept another kind—to say to a hostess that one has had a delightful evening, when the evening has really been a bore, is an accepted lie, and the person who tells the truth under such conditions would be considered rude. In Italy it is assumed that if one is late for school or late for work, he will make up a plausible lie, saving both himself and his teacher or host embarrassment. In money matters, most of us are reasonably honest most of the time; but I wonder how many of us, if we are so lucky as to get our coin back in a public telephone after completing our call, put the coin into the box again and tell the operator of the mistake.

Morals differ from place to place within our own country and within various periods of time. When I was a boy in a small Midwestern town, it was quite immoral to play cards on Sunday; few people in New York, today, would consider this a sin. When I was first superintendent of schools in Winnetka, it was considered immoral for any woman teacher to smoke. Now this is considered to be a matter of personal choice, not of morals.

Morals fluctuate; character is constant. Yet moral education is important, just as manners are important. One has to know what the morals of one's own time and community are and has to comply reasonably with them, if one is going to get along satisfactorily with one's fellows.

What Is Progressive Education?

The traditional schools of the nineteenth century laid great stress on morals. Indeed, they had courses that were called "manners and morals." Morals were taught by precepts. One memorized such proverbs as "Honesty is the best policy;" one read stories in the readers in which virtue was always rewarded and vice was always punished and where the moral of each story was clearly pointed out.

In the progressive schools of today, morals still play a part, a rather subtle, implicit part, in the children's education. There are some things "that just aren't done." Children are made to see what these things are, and social pressures as well as the approval or disapproval of the teacher enforce a great many moral standards. But the progressive school primarily tries to help children to see the reasons back of morals and to develop the character which will result in ethical behavior. Moral education is a by-product, rather than a major part of the school curriculum. Actually any person who is thinking in terms of long range goals and who is thinking in terms of the well-being of his fellows as well as of himself, will lead an ethical life and a moral life. One cannot work effectively with one's fellows, one cannot achieve one's long range goals or social goals, if one violates the proprieties of the community in which one lives.

The question of religious education is not primarily a question as between progressive and traditional education. Public schools in the United States, whether traditional or progressive, are secular schools and cannot deal with religious questions. Yet, in most of our thinking, character and morals are intimately connected

Character, Morals, and Religion

with religion, which combines with the schools in stressing them.

May I not, therefore, depart for a moment from my theme of "What is progressive education," and analyze what seem to me to be the different functions of schools (progressive or traditional), and the home and church in regard to religious education?

Of what does religious education consist?

Three aspects of it are clearly within the field of public education. Three other aspects of it, on the other hand, are equally clearly not within that field.

The three that fit into public education are: the development of character and morals; the study of religious literature; and the study of the religious aspects of history. It is the first of these that we have been discussing. The development of character, particularly, and the ethics that result from farsightedness, social-mindedness, and self-discipline, are the keystones of progressive education.

The study of the literature of religions is a natural and normal part of any study of world literature. Sec-tarian differences need not enter in. It comes more in high school and college than in the lower grades. There we study Dante's *Inferno* without finding ourselves involved in an argument as to whether Hell is really like that. We study Milton's *Paradise Lost* without concerning ourselves with the truth or falsity of Milton's metaphysics. Similarly, the beautiful choice of language, the rhythmic prose and imagery of many pieces of religious literature can be studied without entering into a sec-tarian discussion.

The Bible, however, may be an exception. To study any piece of literature, its meaning must be discussed.

What Is Progressive Education?

Certain religious organizations have their own strict interpretation of the Bible. They would, therefore, object to having their children in the public schools exposed to other interpretations. Mere reading of the Bible, without discussion or interpretation, would be considered by some as of dubious educational value. So the study of the Bible may have to be left to home or church or the individual student.

Considerable parts of religious literature are historical or partially historical. In so far as this is the case and in so far as that history is pertinent to the study of mankind, the historical aspects of religious literature are a part of any good curriculum. Furthermore, one cannot study the history of the crusades or of the Reformation in Europe or the colonization of America, or the present conflicts in Palestine without studying the influence of religions and religious disagreements upon history. Religion again plays a normal part in the public school curriculum.

It is the other three aspects of religious education which clearly do not belong in the public school curriculum: dogma, ritual, and man's relation to God.

Dogma differs from one church to another, from one religion to another. Since the public school has in it children who come from homes of different religions and sects, it is clear that the teaching of any one dogma in the public school would be to propagandize many children toward a belief contrary to that of their parents. To teach all dogmas and doctrines would be confusing even if it were possible. Dogma and doctrine clearly have no place in the public school curriculum, traditional or progressive.

And ritual, likewise, is laid down authoritatively by

Character, Morals, and Religion

various churches and religions. No one seriously advocates the introduction of church ritual in the public schools, for it would be impossible to introduce the rituals of all religions and unfair to introduce those of only one.

The remaining aspect of religion, that of man's relation to God, or man's relation to something far greater and more universal than himself, is the most deep and significant one. In most religions it is very closely tied up with dogma and ritual; it is therefore excluded from the public school curriculum. Yet, there is a common religious feeling on the part of adherents of all religious groups. This feeling is not necessarily linked with either ritual or dogma.

One may, in private meditation or in contact with nature or with great art, or during the ritual of one's church or temple, feel one's self lifted beyond one's self, feel that one has an intimate relationship with something or Some One vastly greater and grander than one's self. This profound religious feeling, which at its height becomes a mystical experience, is actually the center of religion. But it is not a thing that can be taught. Ritual may set the stage for it; beautiful music or any other form of beauty may stimulate it. However, it comes to an individual out of an inner silence.

The question of whether character and ethics can be meaningfully developed without religion can only be answered in terms of an adequate definition of what we mean by religion. That they can be and are developed independently of any particular religion is obvious. No one can claim that only the adherents of his particular sect can have character, can act ethically, can be really good people. Religious education, in the sense of

What Is Progressive Education?

training for one specific dogma or one specific ritual, clearly is not essential to a good life. But when the essence of religion is considered to be the inner realization that one is part of a vastly greater whole, such a religious sense gives power and meaning to life.

That deep religious sense may come from the home. It may come from the church. It may come by contagion from a teacher in school who has it. It may come in solitude. But it cannot be a part of a course of study.

The schools will do their part if they give children an understanding of the history and literature of religions, and if they give them the kind of education which will develop their self-discipline, their long range view and their concern for the well-being of their fellow men.

Chapter 6

How It Started and What It's Like

It is not easy to define progressive education. The reason is simple. By its very nature it is always changing. When we get down to any sort of concrete description of a progressive school, we find that the school has soon progressed beyond our description. In broad terms we can say that progressive education is education that is continually progressing. Progressive education has no fixed creed, it has no constant and unchanging body of knowledge to impart, and it has no one method that is always applied. It is alive and growing.

Science sheds new light every day on how human beings grow and learn and fit their lives to those around them. Science is a long, long way from knowing everything that needs to be known in any field. Even physics, the most basic science, has gone through a revolution during the past half century, and is still in a state of rapid change. The sciences that deal with living things, and with man, most complicated of living things, are newer, and are dealing with vastly more complex problems. They, too, are changing our ideas continuously. And as they give us new knowledge, the application of that knowledge to education must change.

What Is Progressive Education?

And society is changing. The world has been tied closer and closer together by our application of science to means of transportation, to means of communication, and to manufacturing things which require products from all over the world. This fact is changing our ways of life, radically. The way people organized their lives before—the kinds of government, the purposes of government, the kinds of economic system, that developed in the past—these often do not fit our present needs and are being changed to the accompaniment of many groans and doubts. As new problems arise, as experience teaches us new ways of attacking problems, the schools must change to apply what society is learning. As society widens its horizons and establishes new ideals, schools must work toward helping children to understand these ideals and, when they find them good, to work toward their realization.

Progressive education is the attempt to keep pace educationally with the progress of science and the progress of humanity. It tries to apply the ever increasing new knowledge to the way boys and girls are helped to develop into maturity. It tries to use the knowledge of science and human experience to give each youngster a chance to develop his own abilities and interests and to play his part in the changing world. It tries to help him to see his own well-being as inseparable from that of all people.

Progressive education is not new, in one sense—it really is as old as education of any kind. At all periods of history there has been conflict between those who want to preserve old ways and those pioneers who seek new ways. Always there are people who feel safe in the ways to which they are accustomed, and who view any

How It Started and What It's Like

changes with alarm. "The good old ways" and "the good old days" give a feeling of security. Pioneers, from Socrates to Dewey, have been bitterly attacked by "traditionalists."

There have been pioneers in education from earliest times. In modern times the first effective progressive educator, in terms of what we now think of as progressive, was Pestalozzi in Switzerland. More than 150 years ago he had a progressive school and wrote about a kind of education which would be considered progressive even today—few schools yet fully carry out his best ideas. Froebel, in Germany, half a century later, was progressive not only for his time, but in many ways even for today.

In the United States the man whom John Dewey has aptly called "the father of progressive education" was Colonel Francis W. Parker. After seeing the suffering during our War between the States, Colonel Parker felt that if human beings had the right kind of education they would learn to solve their problems without slaughtering each other. And he, like Pestalozzi and Froebel before him, had an intuitive love and understanding of children and rebelled against the crimes committed upon them by the traditional education. He became superintendent of schools in Quincy, Massachusetts, and developed a progressive public school system that was condemned or acclaimed throughout the nation.

As a result of his fame, he was invited, in the early 1880's, to take charge of the Cook County Normal School, which is now the Chicago Teachers College. There he trained teachers in the new, progressive ways of education, and had a demonstration school where students could practice the new ways.

What Is Progressive Education?

In 1896 and 1897, I went to first and second grades in that demonstration school. I remember it vividly—the field trips, the first motion pictures, the shop work for both boys and girls, the simple experiments with science, the school assemblies (“morning exercises”), the activity and informality, the chance to experiment with paints and clay. And I remember how radical the school was considered. My mother was a close friend of the Colonel’s and was conducting a newspaper campaign to counteract the criticism of his progressive methods; so there was much conversation in our home about the fight.

The fight became so bitter and the politicians harassed Colonel Parker so constantly that Mrs. Emmons Blaine decided to set Colonel Parker up with a school of his own, “The Chicago Institute,” about 1900—from kindergarten clear up through the teacher training school. (I went there for my fifth grade.)

The “Chicago Institute” was soon moved from the North Side in Chicago to the University of Chicago on the South Side and became the School of Education there, with Colonel Parker as its head. But the parents on the North Side, having tasted progressive education, wanted it to go on there for their children; so Mrs. Blaine made it possible for them to have a school, too, under one of Colonel Parker’s teachers, Flora Cooke. This was later named the Francis W. Parker School. It became the pioneer progressive private school in the United States and has profoundly influenced American education.

Colonel Parker died shortly after going to the University of Chicago and was succeeded, for a short time, by a young professor of philosophy named John Dewey.

How It Started and What It's Like

Dewey and his wife had had a small progressive school in their home—one which gave children a tremendous amount of freedom. And the lectures he had given in Mrs. Blaine's home had been published in a little book called *School and Society*.

A few years later, John Dewey went to Columbia University as professor of philosophy. There he wrote *Democracy and Education* which has had great influence on the thinking of all progressive educators. He put into this profound book, in carefully thought-out form, what Pestalozzi, Froebel, Colonel Parker, and many others had been groping for. That is why John Dewey's name is so closely associated with progressive education.

But Dewey did not write in a style that was easy to read and his occasional public lectures impressed only the learned. A colleague of his at Teachers College of Columbia University, William H. Kilpatrick, had the gift of simple, interesting writing and great skill as a speaker. It was Kilpatrick who made Dewey's ideas (plus his own which were in harmony with Dewey's) widely known.

Right after the first world war, a group of progressive educators, deeply distressed by the mass murders of the war, got together in the home of one of them to talk about making progressive education more of a reality in our schools. These people were the heads of progressive private schools which had had their rise in the work of the Francis W. Parker school in Chicago. They formed the Progressive Education Association. Dewey was not there, but they asked him to be honorary president, which he has been ever since. Kilpatrick was not

What Is Progressive Education?

there either and was not yet well known, but later he worked actively with the association.

At first the Progressive Education Association was composed entirely of private school people. I believe that when, in 1925, I became a vice-president, I was the only public school representative. Its early focus was on developing the creativeness of children and giving them more freedom. The progressive schools were often referred to as "child centered schools"—the work grew out of children's interests and needs. Scientific research in education played no part in those early days of the association.

By the 1930's, however, the situation had greatly changed. Many public school people had come into the Association; almost all the officers and directors were public school people or university professors. The successive presidents were superintendents of public schools and a professor in a state university.

It was during that decade that the Progressive Education Association became a vital force in American education. It had a membership of only eight or nine thousand, almost half of which consisted of libraries desiring the publications. But it received large grants from the Rockefeller General Education Board and the Carnegie Corporation and entered into the field of scientific research. No longer was it adverse to the scientific approach to education. On the contrary, it conducted the most comprehensive piece of research ever conducted in this field—the Eight-Year Study to which I will refer later.

And at the same time, the scope of progressive education (and the activity of the Association) broadened out from the "Child Centered School" to give much more

How It Started and What It's Like

emphasis to developing a creative, responsible and democratic citizenship—a goal which was inherent in Colonel Parker's work and was never wholly lost.

But the renewed emphasis on this goal led the Association into troubled waters. People who did not want change feared that progressive education was radical. It was, in the literal sense of the word. It went down to the roots of our problems. This was in the era of the great depression, and everyone was searching the causes for the vast unemployment, the starvation in the midst of plenty, the destruction of oranges by the growers, the slaughter of pigs at the order of the government, while people were hungry. The Association published a pamphlet by George Counts called *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?* While the pamphlet actually showed the practical impossibility of the schools building any special kind of social order that was not desired by the citizens who control the schools and colleges, the fact that the goodness of the existing order was challenged scared many conservatives.

At the time we entered the second world war, the psychological atmosphere in the United States was such that conservatism in education became dominant all over the country and membership in the Progressive Education Association fell off. All through the last decade, the Association, which changed its name to the American Education Fellowship, was a mere shadow of its former self, kept barely alive by a small group of university professors. Only recently has it begun to come back to life and engage the active interest of public school people.

The progressive *movement* in education, however,

What Is Progressive Education?

has permeated many educational organizations and affected more and more of our public schools.

Progressive education is not, of course, exclusively or even primarily American. It is a world-wide movement in democratic countries. While the events I have been describing were going on in the United States, there was similar activity in other parts of the world. When Colonel Parker was struggling in the old Cook County Normal School, back in 1889, Cecil Reddie, who had probably never heard of him, started a boys' boarding school in England, called "Abbotsholm," with many ideas that harmonized with Parker's. Three years later, J. H. Badley, one of Reddie's staff, started a coeducational boarding school of his own, "Bedales," which has been one of Britain's most progressive schools ever since.

This early start in England resulted in a whole series of "New Schools" in Germany, Switzerland, and France—almost all of them private schools. Progressive education, called "new education" over there, was talked about and written about in Europe and in all parts of the British Empire throughout the next two decades.

When the first world war ended, a small group of the leaders of this "new education" met in Calais and organized "The New Education Fellowship," with the same broad purposes as were to characterize the Progressive Education Association in the United States. The movement spread rapidly and began to influence public schools as well as private. By 1927, there were groups of the Fellowship in most parts of the world. I took part in the two-week congress held in Locarno that year, and found myself among representatives from fifty-seven countries. Five years later, at Nice, the Pro-

How It Started and What It's Like

gressive Education Association merged with the New Education Fellowship, as its United States Section.

The second world war slowed down the movement in Europe for the time being, as it did in the United States. Even before that, the rise of totalitarianism, first in Russia, then in Italy, then in Germany and Spain, obliterated the movement and its organizations in those countries. No totalitarian government, either communist or fascist, can tolerate an organization that is based on respect for the individual and on the development of democratic ideals and practices.

When the war was over, the Fellowship spread into Italy and Western Germany and resumed its activity in all parts of the free world. It is a potent force. The new public educational program in France, for example, was worked out by leaders of the French section of the New Education Fellowship. UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) has made the Fellowship an affiliated organization and subsidized its research on prejudice as well as helping some of its other activities. In Australia, it promotes meetings in each state to hear lecturers from all parts of the world on what progressive education can do and, in many places, is doing for youth and society. It is the organ of a movement that is going forward in every democratic country.

So much for the general background of progressive education. Now let's be a little more concrete about what it really is.

For the reasons described at the beginning of this chapter, an exact description of practices is not possible. They are always changing as our knowledge and experi-

What Is Progressive Education?

ence change. It is possible, however, to describe practices which are likely to be found in progressive schools today. The description I am about to give is in one sense idealized, for few schools exemplify all these practices—some are found in one, others in another. But all schools and teachers that can be considered progressive seek to carry them out, at least to some degree.

1. *The teacher.* The teacher is the key to any kind of education. No rules, no laws, no courses of study, can be effective except as the teacher makes them so. The progressive teacher must *feel* the spirit of progressive education and have a basic understanding of it. The teacher must be an educated person in the best sense of the word, interested and informed in regard to local, national, and world affairs. The teacher must also have an adequate background of knowledge in the fields in which he specializes.

But that is not enough. The teacher must know how to teach what he or she knows. Education is a profession and the teacher needs professional knowledge—knowledge of what science and experience have shown to be the most effective ways to teach, knowledge of how children and youth develop and learn. And, since new knowledge is constantly coming to light, the teacher, like any professional person, must keep abreast of the most recent developments of science and experience as they relate to his profession.

And above all, the teacher must have a warm, sympathetic interest in children and youth, and respect for their personalities. He or she must understand their different ways of learning, their different experiences, their different interests, and adapt their school life to their needs and abilities.

2. *The classroom.* In a progressive school, the class-

How It Started and What It's Like

room has beauty and homeliness. It is full of evidence of the children's activities and interests. Wherever possible, the seating does not consist of rigid rows of fixed desks, but of movable desks that can be arranged in informal groups, or of tables where children can discuss and work together.

The atmosphere of the classroom is informal and friendly. There is order, of course, but the same kind of order that a group of interested adults, working together, would have. There is silence when the teacher or a classmate is speaking to all, or when all need quiet study. But much of the time there is purposeful conversation and activity.

The discipline is democratic. Most of the rules have resulted from co-operative planning by the children themselves. The teacher is in authority, but uses that authority rarely. The stress is on self-discipline, each child or youth learning to restrain any impulse likely to interfere with his own long range goals, or with the purposes and activities of his fellows.

3. *What is learned.* Many of the things learned don't appear in the traditional course of study—self-discipline, for example, or how to express oneself creatively with wood or clay or color or writing or speech. Adjustment to one's fellows and to the community, an understanding of one's place in the community and the world, a discovery of one's lasting interests, of one's strengths and weaknesses; such things characterize a progressive school more than anything else.

That does not mean, however, that there is no place for learning facts, learning to read, write, and figure. Actually these things are learned at least as effectively in the progressive school as in the traditional one, as

What Is Progressive Education?

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How It Started and What It's Like

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What Is Progressive Education?

will be shown in the next chapter. Indeed, if by effective learning, we mean learning with understanding and with application to life, the learning is much more effective in the progressive school.

The facts of history, geography, and science are learned as necessary parts of the study of how human beings live and have lived together and how each of us fits into the total picture. Subjects are not kept in separate compartments—thirty minutes for geography, thirty for history, thirty for science, and so on. Instead, problems are raised, suitable to the age and experience of the youngsters and tied in with their interests and the needs they feel.

In a junior high school class, for example, the children took up a study of housing. This led into several paths. The problems of a local housing shortage raised the issue of shortages of material. This led to study of the sources of materials used in housing. Where does lumber come from? How are the forests being preserved? What have been the consequences of deforestation? How are we trying to prevent forest fires? And steel. Where are the big iron deposits in the world? What is happening to our resources in the Iron Range in Minnesota? How does this tie in with the present controversy on the St. Lawrence waterway? Then there is the problem of labor, the restrictions placed by trade unions on the use of certain prefabricated materials, the uses and abuses of trade unionism. Another path led to slum clearance in a nearby city. What happens to the people who are dispossessed? Why are people living in slums? Why are some incomes so small that people cannot pay a rent that will compensate the landlord for his investment? Why has the government had to sub-

How It Started and What It's Like

sidize some housing? How have insurance companies played a part, and why are they able to do so?

Such problems are explored and studied in their different aspects and lead into the study of such facts as are necessary for understanding. It can be shown that over the years all the essential facts needed, in the various subject fields, like history, geography, and science, are covered. They are not just covered; they are learned in a setting of experiences that make them a real part of the child's life. They are remembered, as is shown by tests; this is not because they have been memorized but because they have meaning. They are not "shim landy mo witchy waugon tonga shinga hong," but a part of the child's life and experience.

We all need certain skills—the three Rs. And the progressive school recognizes this fact. Unlike the traditional school, however, it uses the insight psychology gives us as to how children can learn these essentials most efficiently. They must be based on experience, on a recognition of need.

Many of the examples in arithmetic books, even in some of the best ones, are entirely meaningless to the child, or even the average adult. Take, for instance, $\frac{2}{3} \div \frac{3}{4}$. What does it mean to you? How many $\frac{3}{4}$ s are there in $\frac{2}{3}$? And if you still remember the old rule of "Invert the divisor and multiply" and get the answer $\frac{8}{9}$, what does it mean to you? And when and where in your life have you ever had to solve such a problem?

I used this example recently in talking to the parent's association at a public school in Brooklyn. One of the fathers took exception to what I was saying; he said something like this:

"The child has to learn the process, so he can use it

What Is Progressive Education?

wherever it is needed. Children are naturally lazy and have to be forced to learn it even if it isn't interesting. It's not the particular example that is important, but making children learn what we adults know is good for them—they don't know!"

I replied, "There are several fallacies in your statement. First, the process of dividing one fraction by another is not very useful, and the process of dividing a smaller fraction by a larger one is not useful at all to most people. In real life, if a woman wants to know how many pieces of goods $\frac{3}{4}$ of a yard long she can get out of $2\frac{1}{2}$ yards of material (not a very frequent situation), she is, in the first place, dividing a larger fraction ($\frac{5}{2}$) by a smaller one ($\frac{3}{4}$), not the other way around. In the second place, it would never occur to her, in spite of her traditional schooling, to write down $2\frac{1}{2} \div \frac{3}{4} = \frac{5}{2} \div \frac{3}{4} = \frac{5}{2} \times \frac{4}{3} = \frac{10}{3} = 3\frac{1}{3}$. She would, instead, use her common sense and see that she could get two pieces out of a yard and a half and a third piece out of the remaining yard and would have a quarter of a yard left over. What I am trying to say is that the abstract process, regardless of application, is *not* something the child must know.

"The second fallacy is that children are naturally lazy. Follow any young child around when he is free and see how worn out you get if you take step for step with him and do everything he does for even two hours. Nor is he mentally lazy—have you ever counted the number of questions a child will ask in a day if you give him a chance? Human beings *want* knowledge. Look at the number of newspapers sold each day, and the number of books and periodicals, not counting fiction. Look at libraries, and radio and television pro-

How It Started and What It's Like

grams. They don't give knowledge exclusively by a long way. But informative programs prove interesting to so many people that business pays high prices to sponsor the best of them. The world over, from the dawn of history, man has sought knowledge. And children and youth are hungry to learn, if we give them bread and not a stone.

"Finally, you say that it is the process that is important, not the particular example. But the process is only really learned if it is understood, and that understanding has to be based on experience. An example that has no base in experience does not contribute to the *understanding* of the process. It becomes merely a trick of manipulating numbers. If we can begin with the concrete realities that the child knows and with problems in which he has an interest or where he feels the need for a solution, we can give him real insight into the process. Mathematics teachers from time immemorial have complained of the lack of real understanding of arithmetic on the part of children trained in traditional schools. Progressive schools are trying to meet this just criticism and to make arithmetic real and meaningful."

This illustrates a basic principle of progressive education. Only such knowledge or skill is taught as can *function* in the lives of the children and youth. If they can't use it in some way, in work or play or thinking or appreciating or following out a special interest, the learning is not real and does not last. It is worse than a waste of time; it makes them think of school work as divorced from life and reality; it breeds distaste for school and book learning; it sometimes results in truancy that leads to delinquency. Instead of stimulating the desire to learn more, it blocks it.

What Is Progressive Education?

Progressive education not only gives at least as much usable knowledge and skill as does traditional education, but gives it in such a way as to increase the natural desire for learning.

4. *Methods.* Progressive education avoids any set or formalized method of teaching, but emphasizes the necessity of using all the knowledge psychology and other sciences can give us in regard to how people learn and develop most fruitfully. In carrying out this principle, progressive teachers will usually be found to be using such practices as the following:

The work will be interesting to the children—not a bitter pill with sugar coating, but satisfaction of their inborn hunger for learning. The learning has meaning for them, and fills a need which they feel. The teacher does not, of course, base the work on the momentary whims of the children, but helps them to see the value to them of certain kinds of learning. Their lasting interests and their experiences are used as a base. But the teacher awakens new interests and provides wider and carefully planned experiences.

Activity characterizes the work. It can be mental activity, such as the solving of a problem; it can be physical activity, going out to see things in the neighborhood, making things with various kinds of materials, painting or drawing, modeling with clay, singing or taking part in a band or orchestra, dramatizing a story or a bit of history, experimenting with science, getting at a principle of arithmetic or mathematics by handling material things, measuring or constructing. Through activity, through *doing* things, the child (or any of us for that matter) gets the *feel* of reality. A solid base of concrete experience is essential for any real learning, however abstract its more advanced stages may be. Even Ein-

How It Started and What It's Like

stein, before he could be sure of the truth of his most abstract theories, had to have them tested out in the laboratory and the astronomical observatory.

The progressive teacher recognizes the wide range of differences among his or her pupils. There is a spread of at least four years in the mental levels of the children in almost any classroom. Some are ready for much more advanced work in some fields than are others. Some learn some things much more slowly than do others. An arithmetic problem, for instance, may be just right for one child, or several children, in the room; these may have had the experience necessary to understand it and may have reached a point of mental maturity where they can successfully grapple with it, while other children, in the same class, may not be ready to attack it for three or four years. Or a book that can be read easily, with interest and appreciation, by many, may be so difficult for Peter that he won't be ready for it for several years. The home background, and the travel or experiences of Robert may result in his being ready to study, with interest and understanding, geographical or economic questions that would have no meaning at all for Helen. The progressive teacher recognizes these differences and provides work and activities suitable to each child or group of children.

This fitting of the work of the schools to widely different children requires much skill and understanding on the part of the teacher, and very few teachers succeed in doing it adequately. But the progressive teacher strives toward this goal, is aware of the differences, and makes at least a fair degree of adaptation to them. And most certainly he or she does not make the less mature or less ready child feel ashamed or disgraced because of not being ready to do more advanced work.

What Is Progressive Education?

That is why the traditional report card is not used in progressive schools. When children are marked on a scale that assumes they are all alike, and when a low mark is an indication of failure of the child to do what is expected of the whole class, real injustice is done to the child. We don't *blame* a child if he wears a shoe smaller than that of the average child of his age. In fact, we never inquire what the average size is. We are only interested in fitting the shoe to the particular child. Children's minds are just as different as their feet—or more so. Until psychological testing was invented we couldn't measure the minds; so, stupidly, we set up our school work on the assumption that the minds were all equal and that it was immoral for a child to fall below the average of his class in school work.

In Australia, even today, some teachers cane children who do not get the lesson assigned to the whole class. We used to. In the United States, we no longer use corporal punishment for poorly prepared lessons. But our traditional schools use low marks as punishment, and parents feel disgraced when their children bring home poor report cards, and they take it out on the children. Yet it is not necessarily the children's fault at all, but the fault of a system that ignores the wide range of differences among the children in the same class, a difference that is just as natural as the difference between foot size, eye color, or any of the physical factors that we all take for granted.

So the progressive school tries to give parents a knowledge of what each child is accomplishing in accordance with that child's own readiness to learn. It does not compare him with the rest of the children. This calls for a different kind of report.

How It Started and What It's Like

Returning to the classroom: Work is usually organized around problems or "projects," rather than following a logical arrangement of separated subjects. If a person "learns" a lesson without its having any clear bearing on anything real in his life, the "learning" is merely an act of memory. We know, through careful scientific research, that the more connections there are between what is learned and a variety of experiences, the more permanent and understanding that learning is, and the more readily it is applied to life situations. Progressive schools simply apply this knowledge to the way they teach. Learning is based on activity and experience and is applied to them. Understanding replaces mere memory of rules, isolated facts, and arithmetical tricks.

The progressive teacher emphasizes skill in how to find information one needs rather than storing the mind with facts or skills one might later find some use for. Thinking and understanding come first, not memorization.

The research of psychology has proved that we concentrate in proportion to our interest, and that we learn, remember, and put forth effort in proportion to our interest. The progressive school therefore seeks to capitalize on children's existing interests and to stimulate new ones. It is an interesting school for the children.

We know, too, that the by-products of any learning are vitally important. If a child learns the principal products of Argentina, for example, in such a way that he dislikes geography, dislikes his teacher for making him learn it, and dislikes the school which provides the teacher, the negative effects far outweigh the value

What Is Progressive Education?

of the learning. But if he learns in connection with a problem that concerns him and therefore interests him, he will have the desire for more learning, he will appreciate teacher and school, and get the most out of them.

5. *Scope.* Finally, the scope of the progressive school is far wider than that of the traditional school. The traditional school was mainly concerned with book learning and conventional "deportment." The progressive school is concerned with the all-round development of the child.

It wants him to learn effectively those things he will need in life. It wants him to develop a healthy body. It wants him to be a happy, wholesome human being; so it is deeply concerned with his emotional adjustment—with what is not too aptly called "mental hygiene." It wants him to be himself, to develop his own special interests and his own special skills. It wants him to develop character—self-discipline, farsightedness, and social-mindedness. It wants him to be a co-operative and responsible member of society—of his home, his school, his community, his country, and the world as a whole. A feeling on the part of each child of real responsibility for the well-being of *all*, and the desire, knowledge, and skill to carry out his broad social responsibility, these are among the most important results the progressive school tries to achieve.

In trying to reach these goals, progressive teachers use all the knowledge they can get from science and human experience. As scientific knowledge and human experience progress and throw light on *how* these goals can best be achieved, the content and methods of the school progress. Such education is rightly called progressive education.

Chapter 7



Does It Work?

THE proof of the pudding is in the eating. The recipe for progressive education may sound good. But does it work? Are children, educated in progressive schools, really as well educated, in terms of results, as are those in traditional schools?

As was pointed out in Chapter Two, education has developed as a science during the last half century. This is because we have learned to measure results. In Colonel Parker's day, we could not have given factual, scientific answers to the question "does it work?" Now we can.

First of all, however, we should scotch a common fallacy. Many people have the notion that the schools of today—traditional and progressive alike—do a less thorough job than did the schools of "the good old days." Fortunately, we can show that this simply isn't true.

For example: We have the report of the Boston Survey Committee, made in 1845. It gives the examination questions and the results for 530 students selected out of 7,526 who were present. These 530 students were "the flower of the Boston Public Schools." There were 154 questions on geography, definitions, grammar,

What Is Progressive Education?

history, natural philosophy, and astronomy. "There should have been 57,873 answers, but there were only 31,159. Of these only 17,216 were correct in sense." The answers contained 2,801 errors in grammar; 3,733 errors in spelling; 835,947 errors in punctuation!

Some examinations which were given in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1856 were discovered, half a century later, in an attic, and the same examinations were then given in 1924, to the public school children, who did better on them than did the children sixty-eight years before.

In Cleveland, an examination given in 1848 was given again in 1947. In total correct answers, the children of 1848 got 924; those of 1947 got 955. These results don't seem to show striking improvement, but they certainly show no loss. There really is improvement, however, if we look more closely. In the earlier days only the intellectually elite went far in school; today almost everyone stays in school through adolescence. In the 1850's, only about 3 per cent of children of high school age were in high school. By 1920, 32 per cent of those between the ages of fourteen and seventeen were in school. Now, 82 per cent of such children are in school! So it is the *mass* of American children who do as well as the intellectual cream of children of a hundred years ago.

Furthermore, the old examinations did not include the many additional things taught in modern schools, and included some things which no modern school would think of teaching, nor any reasonable parent would want to have his child learn. Look at these arithmetic problems from the Cleveland examination of 1848:

"If eight men build 24 rods of wall in 15 days, how many days will it take 10 men to build 36 rods?"

"A and B were hired to cut wood at 50 cents a cord. A could cut a cord in 6 hours, and B in 5 hours. How long would it take them both to cut a cord?"

"Practical" arithmetic:

"Two hours and three minutes make what part of a day?"

"From 18 miles, 2 yds. and 1 foot, take 9 furlongs, 2 feet and 7 inches."

Yet even on such problems as these, for which the modern schools had given no direct preparation, the rank and file of Cleveland children in 1947 totaled 312 right answers to 295 for the select and drilled children of 1848.

I won't risk boring you with more illustrations—many are available. All the evidence shows that even taking the older education on its own terms, the knowledge and skill of the great bulk of our children today compares favorably with that of the more highly selected children of any past period. If we could give those children of the past some of our modern examinations, including an *understanding* of what they learn, and including the many things we now teach and that were not then taught, I wonder how those children of "the good old days" would come out.

So much for schools in general today as compared with the past. But many of today's schools are still at least partly traditional. Do children in progressive schools do as well as children in the traditional schools of the present? Here, we can give even more definite answers, because both sets of students are available for testing.

What Is Progressive Education?

As far as I know, the first progressive public schools to carry out systematic measurements of their results in comparison with more traditional ones were those of Winnetka, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Thirty years ago, they began to make regular checks on the efficiency of their products. They used standardized tests to compare the achievement of the children in the three Rs with achievement over the nation. They were almost always ahead. But they recognized that Winnetka children, on the average, came from homes where the parents had more education than in the average American community, and more means to give children educational opportunities outside school—such as travel and plenty of books. So the Winnetka schools compared the achievement of their children with that of children from comparable homes, but more traditional schooling.

This was made easy by the fact that three other suburbs, very similar to Winnetka, sent their children to the same high school. These suburbs all had good schools, but at first all of them, and later two of them were definitely more traditional in their education programs.

Year after year, the grades made by the Winnetka children after they got to the high school (which was under a different administration), were compared with the grades of the children from the other three suburbs. With only minor fluctuations, sometimes in one subject, sometimes in another, the high school marks of the children from the Winnetka public schools were consistently a little higher in English, Mathematics, History, Science, and Languages, than were those of the

children who had had a more traditional elementary education.

But the striking difference was in other evidences. A larger percentage of Winnetka children took part in the clubs organized by the various high school departments—the French Club, the Mathematics Club, the Science Club, and so on—21 per cent more proportionately than children from the other suburbs. Again in music clubs, dramatic clubs, and publications, the Winnetka children participated out of proportion to their number. And in intramural athletics and in membership on athletic teams to play against other schools, the children from Winnetka had a much higher percentage than did the others. On school teams the membership of Winnetka children exceeded that of the other schools by 37 per cent at the time an analysis was made.

The Winnetka youngsters had almost 50 per cent more representation in the general Honor Club and 100 per cent more in the Scholastic Honor Society than did the others. And their leadership was recognized by the other students. They were elected to office in the various student organizations nearly 18 per cent more than those from the other suburbs, and had nearly 38 per cent more representatives elected to the student government.

In short, that one progressive school system, for many successive years, produced students whose high school work was superior in the school subjects and who were outstandingly above children from more traditional schools in range of active interests and in leadership.

These results are just one sample. Many, many other studies have been made in many parts of the country.

What Is Progressive Education?

A book published ten years ago, called *An Evaluation of Modern Education* (J. Paul Leonard and Alvin Eurich, D. Appleton Century Co.) sums up the results of the most important ones up to that time. The authors conclude: "In practically every study and in almost every skill that has been considered . . . children in schools following the newer practices are slightly if not markedly superior to children in the more conventional schools."

In a similar research study, published at about the same time (G. Derwood Baker and others, *New Methods vs. Old in American Education*, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941), the authors summarize their conclusions thus:

In general the evidence shows convincingly that the new methods do not result in a loss of academic proficiency in the usual school subjects, and that, where any measures have been applied, there is a definite gain in terms of initiative, skill in dealing with problems, knowledge of contemporary world affairs, and social participation.

More recently (December, 1948), J. Wayne Wrightstone of the New York public schools, summarized the results of the "Experience Curriculum"—an experiment with progressive education on the high school level—at Midwood High School in Brooklyn as follows:

On the whole, therefore, it may be inferred from test results that the students enrolled in the experimental experience curriculum gained more than those in the ordinary ninth-year curriculum in the objectives measured in English, social studies, Mathematics, and civic

beliefs . . . The findings indicate that students in the experience curriculum have shown commendable gains in academic skills, powers of thinking, and civic attitudes. Studies of student interest, appreciations, personal and social adjustment, which are not reported in this article, revealed similar commendable gains by the experimental curriculum. (*High Points* 30, 1948)

As far as I am aware, right up to the present, every time that progressive education has been measured against traditional, it has shown the same kind of results. Knowledge and skill in the traditional subjects are at least as well learned, usually better. And the broader purposes of progressive education—initiative, personal and social adjustment, understanding, acquaintance with our contemporary world, broad range of interests, and leadership—are achieved to a markedly higher degree.

The biggest and most important study of the results of progressive education took place between 1932 and 1940, and is usually called "The Eight Year Study." The General Education Board, established by the Rockefeller trustees, gave a large grant to the Progressive Education Association (supplemented by another grant from the Carnegie Corporation— together they totaled over a million dollars) to make a very thorough study of what effect progressive education in high school has upon college students.

Thirty high schools, of different sizes and kinds, in different parts of the United States, were selected for the experiment. Almost all important colleges and universities in the country agreed that for five years they would accept graduates of these thirty schools without

What Is Progressive Education?

examination and without regard to what they had studied, but on the recommendation of the principal that a student was ready to do university work, and the submission of full information about each student.

The teachers and principals of these high schools met together for conferences lasting several weeks (during the summer). Expert consultants were furnished to them. They worked together in groups to plan the best education they could devise without regard to university requirements or their own traditions. Some of them worked out really progressive programs. Some couldn't break away from old habits entirely and merely tried to improve their old programs.

The first three years were given to educating the high school children under the new programs. Then for the next five years many of these children, in successive classes, went on to various colleges and universities.

In those universities which received a number of graduates of the thirty schools, other students, from traditional high schools, were selected for comparison. These were called the "controls." Each "control" was carefully picked to match one of the "experimental" students. He had to have about the same age and the same intelligence (I. Q.). He had to come from a similar kind of home—that of a business man, a professional man, a farmer, a mechanic, etc.—and from a similar town—manufacturing, or agricultural, big or little, and so on. The matching was done with great care in each case. Of course, it wasn't perfect—no two people are exactly alike—but when 1,475 pairs of cases are studied, small differences in individual pairs average out.

A staff composed of university professors then did the comparing of the students. They devised all sorts

of tests to see which students did best in college. Of course they compared the grades they made in regular university classes. But they went far beyond that. Which students were most active in campus life? Which had more initiative? Which showed more leadership? Which made better use of free time? In short, all things considered, which had had the more fruitful education in high school as indicated by the lives they lived and the work they did in the universities?

The results were clear cut. In their university courses, the graduates of the thirty schools did at least as well as their "controls" from traditional schools, on the whole, slightly better. In other things measured, they consistently did at least as well as students from traditional schools who were matched with them, and in such things as the following they did better:

They were more often judged to possess a high degree of intellectual curiosity and drive;

They were more often judged to be precise, systematic and objective in their thinking;

They were more often judged to have developed well-formulated ideas concerning the meaning of education, especially in the first two years of college;

They more often demonstrated a high degree of resourcefulness in meeting new situations;

They participated somewhat more frequently, and more often enjoyed appreciative experiences, in the arts;

They participated more in most organized student groups;

They earned in each year a higher percentage of non-academic honors (officers in organizations, elections to

What Is Progressive Education?

managerial societies, athletic insignia, leading roles in dramatic and musical presentations);

They received slightly more academic honors each year;

They had a somewhat better orientation toward the choice of a vocation;

They demonstrated a more active concern for what was going on in the world.

(Wouldn't you, or any parent, want the kind of education which produces these results for your son or daughter without loss in the regular college subjects?)

There was also an interesting supplementary study. The results described above were derived from all 1,475 pairs of students, so those students who came from schools in the experiment that had changed ways only slightly were averaged in with those from schools that had made radical changes. In the supplementary study, on the other hand, a comparison was made of the record of the graduates of the six schools in the experiment that had changed their program least, with the graduates of the six schools that had departed farthest from the traditional—the ones that had the most progressive high school program. When the graduates of the first group were compared with their controls, there was very little difference. But when the graduates of the most progressive six of the thirty schools were compared with *their* controls, the difference was striking. These youngsters not only equaled their controls academically; they shot well ahead of them in practically every subject. And in interests, campus activities, leadership, good use of leisure time, and so forth, their superiority was outstanding.

To many, these results were a surprise. Shouldn't students whose high schools are organized to prepare them for college, who had taken the courses the colleges want them to take, and who had a thorough, systematic training in the high school subjects, do much better work in their university classes than students who had a very different, much freer kind of education? The traditional teacher would certainly expect this.

But the progressive teacher would expect the opposite. He knows that progressive education should be incorporating all that science and experience have taught us in regard to how human beings learn. The high schools that most completely reorganized their programs were those that were following as fully as they could the leads that the study of psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, sociology, etc., had given. Naturally, one would expect the children educated in the light of these sciences to be better educated, better prepared, than children trained under traditional systems of education that ignored scientific findings.

So to the progressive teacher, the results of the Eight Year Study were not a surprise, but a validation of the theories that had grown out of careful research.

There have been scores of careful investigations of the results of progressive education. Many kinds of measurement have been used to compare them with the results of traditional education. The evidence is overwhelming that when we use traditional measures, like school or college grades, and test the formal academic knowledge which is the main goal of traditional education, the youngsters who have had progressive education do at least as well as those who have had traditional education and often do somewhat better. But when we

What Is Progressive Education?

measure the broader results which progressive education tries especially to achieve—understanding, initiative, interest, co-operation, leadership, taking a responsible place in the community, and all-round development as human beings, the products of progressive schools are, on the average, strikingly superior to those whose education has been traditional.

The answer to our question, "Does it work?" is, beyond doubt, "Yes!"

Chapter 8

Why All the Shouting?

IN SPITE of all the evidence in favor of progressive education and the lack of any scientific evidence against it, one hears innumerable criticisms and attacks. Why?

There are three main causes: conservatism, lack of faith in democracy, and lack of knowledge. And there are sinister forces that exploit these three. Let's look at each of these causes.

First, conservatism. Throughout the history of man there has been resistance to change. Socrates had to drink hemlock and die because he upset the customs and ways of thinking of the Greeks. Jesus was crucified because his doctrines were a threat to established laws and customs. Bruno was burned at the stake partly because he overturned the general belief that the earth was flat and all the universe circled around it. People don't like to have their beliefs and customs changed.

In the United States, we have gradually overcome resistance to change in physical things. We like new machines and new gadgets now, although this was not always true. Mechanical invention has broken through the resistance to change. Even medicine has finally reached a point where the resistance to new remedies

What Is Progressive Education?

has given way to welcome. But when it comes to *social* invention, all the old resistances stand in our way. They opposed public schools when they were new, they were against public libraries, they resisted trade unions, and they fought every step toward public responsibility for persons or communities that needed help. Our recent lack of resistance to physical invention has increased our comfort and convenience and health immeasurably and has tied the whole world together. Our resistance to changes in ways of getting along together in the world society which our inventions have created threatens that world society, and us with it, with destruction by the same physical inventions.

It is inevitable that conservatism—resistance to change—should oppose changes in education, regardless of the logic or evidence in favor of them. Teachers were brought up in the traditional schools; most of them were trained to teach in traditional ways. They have made their careers and established their security in traditional education. It is not easy, no matter what scientific studies may show to be the advantages, to change from well-known old ways to unfamiliar new ones.

Parents were trained in the old system and are used to it. They feel baffled and unsure when their children's schooling is different from what their own was. They are afraid that their children will not be able to go on to higher education, or will not succeed in life if new ways are tried. Just as people used to be afraid of hospitals, of anesthetics, and of vaccination, when these were new, many fear that the new education will harm their children instead of helping them.

This conservatism has to be recognized and understood. But it cannot be allowed to stop progress. Human

Why All the Shouting?

beings fortunately are venturesome as well as conservative. They want progress even when they resist it. Parents really want their children to have a better education than they themselves had; they really want the world to be a better world than the one in which they are living. These positive desires, in time, overcome their fears and the inertia of tradition, and progress comes, stronger because of the resistance it has had to overcome.

The second cause of opposition to progressive education is that many people, deep down, have little faith in democracy. They are afraid to let people see all sides of a question; they don't trust human beings to work out sound solutions to problems. They think of children as too immature to think soundly. Actually children think as well, within the limits of their knowledge and experience, as adults do. And actually human beings generally, given the necessary knowledge and experience, work out their problems in the long run, with ever-increasing wisdom.

Distrust of the people and of democracy has always led to distrust of universal education. Universal education has won its fight in our country, so the battleground has shifted from a fight against schooling for all into a fight against encouraging thinking by all in the schools. The fight is not out in the open; the enemies of freedom of thought and discussion in the schools don't admit even to themselves that they are opposed to this. They march under the banner of Americanism; and this is ironical, since America has, from its founding, held freedom of thought and discussion among its most sacred traditions. Yet any digression by teachers or pupils from the points of view held by those con-

What Is Progressive Education?

servatives who have little real faith in democracy is called by them "subversive" or "un-American." They fail to recognize that their own distrust of democracy, their own attempt to suppress free thought and free discussion, is the most dangerous subversion of American ideals.

We shall return to this point later.

The third cause of attacks on progressive education is the most widespread. It is lack of knowledge as to what progressive education really is. And this is not primarily the fault of the parents and other citizens. Many of them are seeking knowledge and understanding. The progressive schools and teachers are partly to blame. They have failed to share the knowledge they have with the people in the community. Knowing that lectures are among the least effective means of education, they have relied considerably on lectures to "instruct" parents. Knowing that children only learn on the basis of experience, they ignore the parents' lack of experience with the principles of progressive education. They haven't even written very much about what they are trying to do, and why and how, in language that makes this intelligible and interesting to the ordinary layman.

Like people in every profession, teachers and professors of education have had to develop a technical vocabulary; a technical term can, to the colleague in the profession, carry a meaning that would require many paragraphs to make it understandable to the nonprofessional. This can be illustrated by a medical term that is now commonly used by everyone—"immunization." If a person who knows nothing about the germ theory of disease is to understand the meaning back of the term one would have to begin by explaining what bacteria

Why All the Shouting?

are, and viruses, and what they do in the human body, what the body does to combat them, and how certain kinds of treatment stimulate action in the body that counteracts the effects of bacteria and viruses.

I am reminded of an American friend of mine in Italy, who had a very devoted but uneducated Italian maid to take care of the baby. One day the maid had a bad cold, but was kissing the baby on the mouth, with her usual demonstrativeness. My friend said, "Angela, I wish you wouldn't kiss Bobby when you have a cold."

Angela looked so bewildered that my friend tried to explain why. "You see, Angela, when you have a cold there are thousands and thousands of little tiny things in your nose and throat that are alive. They are so tiny that you could not possibly see them—you could get hundreds on the point of a pin. They are called 'germs' and they make you have a cold. Now each one of these divides into two baby germs. They grow up very quickly and divide into more baby germs; then they soon are grown and divide into more and more baby germs until there are lots and lots of them. When you kiss the baby on the mouth a few of these tiny, invisible germs get into his mouth. Then they begin dividing and the baby germs quickly grow up and divide, and first thing you know there are thousands of these germs in the baby's mouth and nose and throat, and the baby gets a cold like yours."

Angela listened with wider and wider eyes, then said, "My, you Americans are superstitious!"

Without a background of scientific knowledge, a person has great difficulty in understanding the explanation of a single term or idea. Things often seem almost silly if one's knowledge is inadequate. But within a

What Is Progressive Education?

profession, the underlying knowledge can be taken for granted and a short-cut term can be exceedingly useful. Indeed, exchange of technical information would be hampered unbearably if a technical vocabulary were not invented.

There can be no reasonable quarrel with the specialized use of words like "integration," "core-curriculum," "group dynamics," and so on among members of the teaching profession. But if they spring these on parents or others not in their profession, they seem to be talking gibberish. And most books on progressive education use professional terminology that makes them relatively useless to parents who want to know what progressive education is.

Another failure on the part of the teaching profession is that while children learn about almost everything else, they don't learn *about* education. They experience it, yes. But they are not helped to examine and analyze the experience. Thus, even those parents who went to some of the earlier progressive schools as children and now have children of their own in school are sometimes shockingly ignorant as to what really constitutes progressive education—what scientific knowledge it is based upon, and what its purposes are.

The situation is not helped by some of those advocates of progressive education who go to extremes. I have known some professors of education with the rare gift of popular style in writing and speech who have done more harm than good in their explanations. In their zeal to get their ideas across they overstated their case until it looked to people with a traditional background as if progressive education had gone off the deep end. In their attack on authoritarianism in school,

Why All the Shouting?

they make the progressive school seem like something without form or substance, a laissez-faire, undisciplined place where children only play and follow each momentary whim.

Others, deeply concerned with some of the unsolved problems in our world today, and feeling that they had at least partial solutions to them, have combined their advocacy of progressive education with their advocacy of their special solutions for world problems. Naturally, their hearers, especially if they didn't like the solutions proposed, considered progressive education to be propaganda for that particular set of ideas, and reacted against both at once.

Theodore Roosevelt once said that every progressive movement has a "lunatic fringe." Progressive education has had such a fringe. An occasional little private school, an occasional teacher in a public school, has gone to extremes on one or another progressive practice. An idea, imperfectly understood, is put into unskillful practice with results that are ludicrous or tragic. People, seeing this, generalize upon it and think it is a sample of progressive education.

Because of this lack of understanding by the general public, all sorts of charges are made against progressive education, and some of them carry considerable persuasion to those who are not fully informed. Let's take up a few of the most common:

"Progressive education is lax—it is soft education. It gives neither knowledge nor discipline."

Here it is assumed that because a progressive school is interesting to the children, it cannot give as good training as the traditional education that often seemed hard or boring. The fact that everyone works harder

What Is Progressive Education?

at a job that interests him is ignored. The fact that what concerns a person and is learned for a purpose is better learned, is not recognized. The value of self-discipline in character building is not seen, and externally imposed order is thought to be a more real discipline than finding out how to work well with people.

"Progressive education is communistic."

This charge is so absurd that one is tempted to ignore it. But it is made too often not to be answered. What do we mean by "communistic"? *Totalitarian*? The progressive school is the democratic school, the one that opposes authoritarianism and lays the greatest stress on the right of the individual to express himself, to be himself. It is at the opposite pole from totalitarianism.

Favoring class struggle, and revolution by the seizure of control by an organized minority? Surely no one in his senses would claim that any progressive school advocated *that*. Mutual understanding, honest analysis of facts, democratic procedures, respect for individuals without regard to class or color or creed, characterize the progressive school.

Imperialistic? Children who are taught to understand peoples of all nationalities and cultures and to respect their rights are not likely to grow into imperialists.

Socialistic? That may seem more plausible. I heard a speaker against progressive education make this charge recently. His evidence? Why, "they teach social studies, and they try to 'socialize' the children"! The poor man was so ignorant (though he was a university professor!) that he did not know that "social studies" is just the name given to the study of how people live and have lived together in the world—that it includes such respectable subjects as history, geography, economics, and

Why All the Shouting?

political science, with a little sociology and anthropology. As to "socializing" the children, he either did not know, or thought his audience wouldn't, that every child has to learn to get along with others, to think of others, to work and play with others. That's all "socializing" him means.

"But some progressive teachers are socialists." Probably. And some are Democrats, and some are Republicans. Some advocates of progressive education believe that the government needs to increase its ownership and controls; some think that it has already gone too far. Their views are their own. But progressive education works toward helping each child, as he gets old enough, to think these problems through to reach his own conclusions.

And right there comes the difficulty. When youngsters—particularly those in their teens, and those in college—begin to think for themselves they will often disagree with their parents. The more the parents seem to them prejudiced, the more the youngsters will argue the other side of the question. I have no doubt that many parents with strong opinions against anything they consider "socialistic" have met opposition from their sons and daughters when these have learned in school to do their own thinking. The same is true where parents are dogmatically socialistic. They'll hear the *other* side from their youngsters.

Progressive education is not a political or economic doctrine and it has no commonly held creed in these matters. It is education for the fullest possible development of each child as a person and as a responsible member of society, in the light of the best psychological and other scientific knowledge available.

What Is Progressive Education?

In the United States, I have never known of a Communist who was an active advocate or practitioner of progressive education. I don't see how it would be possible for one person to be in favor of two things which are so completely opposed at every point.

A charge less often made is that progressive education is godless. With the constitutional separation of church and state in this country, both progressive and traditional education avoid religious teaching in school. But most teachers I know—traditional or progressive—have at least as much religious belief and reverence as do other Americans. Every church or faith has members of the teaching profession in it—progressive and traditional alike. Progressive education as such is not for or against any particular religious doctrine.

"But John Dewey does not believe in absolute truth," a student in a New York State Teachers College said to me after a lecture I gave there last fall. I had heard this a number of times before, but this student put a new angle on it. "If people don't believe in absolute truth you never will know whether or not they're lying. You just couldn't trust anybody!" she added.

Dewey is a philosopher. He has his own carefully thought-out ideas on the nature of the universe. If he thinks that man's search for the ultimate truth, the final understanding of the universe and God, will never end, or whatever his beliefs are as to the meaning of reality, would any of us question his right to express his philosophy? But it is John Dewey's writings on *education* that have made themselves felt in the schools. There he has ably expressed things that progressive teachers feel—the need for democracy, for responsibility, for respect for individuals, and so on. And for that

Why All the Shouting?

reason his educational writings have had much influence and he is greatly respected. But progressive teachers who are Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Christian Scientists, Quakers, and, especially outside the United States, Mohammedans, Hindus, Shintoists, Confucianists, Buddhists, and what have you, do not necessarily agree with his religious (or nonreligious) views of the universe. I have personally known progressive educators of every one of the faiths just mentioned. Their religious denomination, or lack of one, does not interfere with their effort to achieve the goals of progressive education. Neither does their agreement or disagreement with Dewey's philosophy of the nature of truth and reality.

I think the above, with variations and elaborations, are the main charges against progressive education. They are clearly due to lack of understanding of what is meant by the term. Interestingly enough, the critics have never given any scientific evidence to prove their charges.

But why do such charges fall on fertile ground?

There are various reasons. The most important general ones have been discussed, conservatism, lack of knowledge, and lack of faith in democracy. There are, however, more personal reasons.

One is that parents do not all have children who are above average. When these parents went to traditional schools, a low grade was a disgrace; it was immoral to get a poor mark. Since in the nature of averages there are as many children below average as above in any particular, and since "below average" in school work was considered morally wrong, the parents of children whose school work is "below average" feel disgraced.

What Is Progressive Education?

They don't want to blame themselves; they don't want to blame their child. So progressive education becomes an easy scapegoat. Always in a concerted attack against progressive education there will be found, in the nucleus, a group of parents whose children are not doing as well as they think they should. That progressive education tries to fit their children, tries to help rather than punish them, and avoids unfair competition with more advanced youngsters, is all beside the point. The parents feel badly about their children, and someone or something has to take the blame. Progressive education, being something new, is a good target.

Of course, sometimes the school or the teacher is at least partly to blame. Even the most progressive teacher in the best progressive school is human and fallible, and not possessed of all wisdom. Mistakes are made and harm is done by progressive teachers in spite of the best of intentions and the best available knowledge. The same is true of traditional teachers. The individual situation should be dealt with, but we should not generalize on the mistake and attribute it to the purposes and practices of progressive education.

Another reason that some people listen to charges against progressive education is that they don't like high taxes. Good schools cost more in immediate outlay than do poor ones, even though they are a much better investment. Good schools are often progressive. So, it is argued, progressive education increases taxes, and who wants taxes to be higher? Disgruntled taxpayers are always a vigorous part of any community organization that fights progressive schools.

There are organized fights. And this is where sinister influences play a part. Certain people, for financial gain,

Why All the Shouting?

or publicity, or because of vehement personal feelings, have organized to attack progressive education wherever possible. They watch for signs of local dissatisfaction, then exploit it for their own ends. They distribute literature and canned accusations. They take credit when, in any city, the opponents defeat a progressive school administration. The sincere local objectors often do not know that they are being used and misled by these fanatics. *McCall's Magazine* for September, 1951, showed the workings—and the irresponsible personnel—of this sinister group. So, too, does David Hubbard's book, *This Happened in Pasadena* (Macmillan, 1951).

But such people would be powerless if it were not for the lack of understanding of the general public as to what progressive education is. Their very attacks have aroused people to try to discover what it is that they are attacking, and ignorance is beginning to dissolve.

All parents want the best for their children. This desire, like all desires for progress in the past, will overcome the inertia of conservatism. And because democracy is being challenged by Soviet Communism, we are awakening to the values of democracy and freedom, and want our children educated so that they can take their places in a democratic society and make their own contributions to it. Educators have begun to see the necessity for helping parents and others to know what progressive education is, and parents are reaching out for the answer.

The three causes for the outcries against progressivism in education are in process of dissolution. Conservatism and inertia always yield to the forces of

What Is Progressive Education?

growth; faith in the common man has advanced through the ages; and ignorance gives way to knowledge. Like progress in all applied sciences, progress in education will triumph.

Chapter 9

"What Can I Do for My Child?"

IN THIS chapter I want to talk as one parent sharing his thoughts with other parents. My wife and I have run the gamut, participating in the lives and problems of our three children from babyhood to adulthood, through nursery school, kindergarten, elementary school, junior and senior high school, and college. Now we are partaking of their experience as their children, our nine grandchildren, are in turn beginning their school lives. We have made many of the mistakes other parents make, and, I hope, learned from them. And we have seen the mistakes—and the wise actions—of many of our friends and neighbors.

As I set down some of the results of this learning of ours, I don't mean to be preachy, nor to assume that *any* parent can always do the right thing. We're all very human and our ideals are always ahead of our practice. But without the ideals, our practice lacks direction and purpose. So, without hesitation, I am expressing ideals, which, when we are wise enough to carry them out, work.

Parents who were educated in traditional schools are often baffled as to how to help their children when these are in schools that are more progressive. Such

What Is Progressive Education?

children often do not have the kind of homework their parents used to have. The methods of learning to read, or even do arithmetic, are not the methods with which we are familiar. Yet parents sincerely want to help their children every possible way. And there are ways in which they can be of great help. Progressive education requires progressive homes as well as progressive schools.

First of all, if children are to learn the ways of democracy, the home needs to be democratic. That means, above all, that there must be genuine respect for each person, however young or old, as a human being in his own right. Differences have to be recognized, understood, and honored. The universal need for self-expression has to be provided for. The need for security, for feeling loved and encouraged and being an essential part of the family, has to be met. And each member of the family has to have a sense of participation, of shared work for things desired by all.

Because children are young and inexperienced, we too often bypass them in our planning. It is easier and quicker for the parents to make decisions than to hold a family council to plan something the family wants to do—a trip, a movie, an improvement in the house, a replacement or repair of a worn piece of furniture, the buying of a piece of equipment. Yet when children participate in such decisions, see the problems involved, and find their opinions respectfully listened to, the whole enterprise has meaning for them. They see the financial problems if they are old enough, and at least recognize that there are such problems if they are younger. They appreciate the results. They learn from their parents' experience. And they gain the sense of democratic participation.

"What Can I Do for My Child?"

The more parents share their experiences with the children the more the children will share their experiences with their parents. A family solidarity emerges.

We must remember always that children *think* as well as we do. Within the limits of their knowledge and experience their reasoning power is as keen as ours. They are remarkably shrewd and discerning and their mistakes, like ours, are due not to failure of reasoning power but to failure to take into consideration certain facts that have bearing on the problem. Our job is to supply them with the knowledge and experience necessary to think a problem through.

Of course we sometimes have to exert authority and make quick decisions. But we fail to educate if, as soon as we can find a suitable time, we don't discuss with the children *why* we decided and acted as we did. And we make a great mistake if we are not absolutely honest with the youngsters.

For a very young child we have to simplify an explanation to a point where his own experience makes him able to understand it, but words are not the only way of communicating. For example:

When I was a little over two years old I used to watch my baby sister get her bath. I loved her and kissed her; but her little toes tempted me and I would bite them whenever I got a chance. My mother tried to explain that this hurt the baby, but her words had no effect. So when I was having my bath she told me to put my toe in my mouth. I did. Then she said, "Now bite—hard!" I did, and yelled. I realized then that biting a toe gave pain, and I never bit my sister's toes again.

Notice that I wasn't being scolded or punished or

What Is Progressive Education?

made ashamed. I was understood and given an experience that would help me to reason in the light of facts.

Our respect for our children and their wants is reflected in their respect for ours. A friend of mine had an amusing experience with her year-old baby. She tried, like many modern mothers, not to take things away from him without substituting something that he would like. He usually accepted the substitute, but he was not fooled. One day his mother had just got a new Sears Roebuck catalogue and was reading it. Now little Frank was often allowed to turn the pages and look at the pictures in old catalogues; so he wanted to play with the one his mother was reading. He didn't cry and demand it, or grab it. Instead, he pulled off his shoe, went to his mother and gave it to her with one hand, while he pulled the catalogue away with the other!

Children are never too young to learn from experience. We parents have the responsibility to see that they get the experience they need. But now let us turn to the kinds of experience we can give children at home that will have direct value for them in their academic school work.

When the child is in the early grades, the main intellectual learning that confronts him is reading. His readiness for reading may come early or late. If the school is progressive, he will not be urged to read until he shows that he is really ready—there are special tests for this and the teacher has many ways of knowing when the child is ripe for reading. She isn't worried about waiting. No harm comes to a child if he doesn't begin to read until he is eight years old or more. When he is mentally ready and has the necessary background of experience, he learns quickly, loves reading, and

"What Can I Do for My Child?"

soon makes up for his delay. The harm comes from trying to force him to read too soon. Then he becomes discouraged, feels inferior, and dislikes reading and school. He may never entirely overcome this handicap.

And it is parents who, in their eagerness to see their child get ahead, often give child and teacher a sense of pressure in regard to reading. Our best bet at this stage is to keep hands off and not worry if our child begins slowly. We can, on the other hand, give the child the experiences that will make words have meaning for him. We can tell him stories, read aloud to him, take him on little excursions, build up his general background. We can help him see differences in sizes and shapes; this is good basic training for later recognition of words. We can let him have interesting picture books. And we can let him see what fun we have in reading. That's enough. Leave the rest to the school and let the child and teacher know that you're not in a hurry.

When the child does begin to read, we can be interested and encouraging. If he reads aloud to us, we can show our appreciation. But if he stumbles over a word, we should not interrupt his reading by saying, "You know that word—try again," or "sound it out." Simply tell him the word and let him go right on. If, afterwards, he responds with interest to the idea of going back and seeing if he can now recognize some of the words he missed, we can play that little game with him; but it is not important. He'll get that kind of help in school. The main thing is to let him have practice in reading, to be interested in it, and to feel that we are interested.

In getting books for our children for Christmas or birthdays or other occasions, or in helping them choose

What Is Progressive Education?

books from the library, we must be very careful not to get them books that are too difficult. *Much* reading of books that can be read with little effort and with real interest results in a steadily increasing skill in reading and love of reading. Trying to struggle through a book which is too hard results in less skill, in bad reading habits, and in dislike of reading.

"Comic" books are a bone of contention. Children love them, and many parents, teachers, and librarians frown on them. We do best, I believe, not to disapprove of them. We can help youngsters choose the less offensive ones, and discuss with them their relative merits, and we can counterbalance them with plenty of good literature, books that are easy to read and really interesting, *and* well written.

I remember my distress when my son was about eight or nine and began devouring "big little books." He spent much of his allowance on them and gradually accumulated a library of nearly a hundred, which he shared with his friends. But he also liked—and had—good books. One day I said to him, "Chan, when are you going to outgrow these silly books?" He looked at me with a twinkle, and said, "Pop, when are you going to outgrow reading the funnies in your morning paper?" It was a perfect answer, and I said no more. A year or two later he was thoroughly fed up with the "big little books." As he matured, he became a discriminating and avid reader of the best.

We parents often worry too much about passing phases in our children and forget that we, too, went through them. In my boyhood, there were "dime novels," and the Alger books. Such reading answers some need in children, and, if balanced by good lit-

"What Can I Do for My Child?"

erature, it finally loses its appeal. It is the universal and lasting appeal of good literature that makes it good. It can fully hold its own in the long run.

Writing follows reading. Progressive schools generally teach "manuscript writing," using letters like simple print, especially in the early grades. This worries many parents. "When is my child going to *write*?" they ask. Careful experiments have shown that children learn manuscript writing more quickly than the traditional "cursive" writing. The words look more like the words in books. Reading and writing thus become closely related. It helps spelling, too. And experiments show that, aside from the fact that "manuscript" is more legible, those who use it habitually write just as fast as those who write "cursive." It is largely pressure from parents that makes most schools train children to change over to cursive in later grades. There is no logical or scientific reason for ever making the change.

Parents should, therefore, not worry about their children's use of "manuscript writing." It is the ability to put one's thoughts on paper, so that they can be read, that counts.

As children begin to write, they are usually eager to practice and show their new skill. At this point it is very important that parents be uncritical and appreciative. Never urging the child to write, the parents can show keen interest in any spontaneous efforts made at home. Don't bother about spelling unless the child asks help. If the spelling is so weird that you really don't know what a word is, ask him, and perhaps say, "Oh, is that what you mean? Most people write it this way." Then show him.

Later, when the child writes little stories or poems or

What Is Progressive Education?

letters, first of all appreciate them. Then, if you find that the child is neither annoyed nor discouraged by the suggestion, you can remark, "Some of your words aren't spelled the way most people spell them. Would you like to have me show you how they are usually written?" But if such remarks are not clearly welcome, avoid them and leave the question of spelling to the teacher. Always let the child realize that you are much more interested in *what* he has written than in *how*.

In due time—maybe years later—he will respond gladly to suggestions as to improvement in form, if they are given constructively. "This is such a good story (or letter or poem) that you may want to make it look as good as it is. Shall I show you where it isn't spelled correctly, or where it needs periods and commas?"

Children's spelling is always a worry to their parents, and to many teachers. English spelling is so irregular and often illogical that mastery of it is rare. A great deal of research has been done as to how to teach spelling, and schools which heed this research get somewhat better results, on the average, than do traditional schools. But neither traditional schools, nor progressive, no matter how much time and effort they put into it, succeed in getting all children to spell well. It is most discouraging. We parents forget how badly we, and our parents and grandparents, spelled as children—unless we were exceptional. Ability to spell comes slowly for many children. The school will work on it, we may be sure. We parents will do well to be tolerant, patient, and sympathetic. Our fuming does harm and gets nowhere.

As suggested above we can sometimes tactfully help a child by pointing out the right way to spell a word he

has missed. And we can show our satisfaction in his gradual improvement.

Praise for the things that are right is far more effective than criticism of the things that are wrong. And especially at home, where we are not responsible for technical training in school subjects, our part is to encourage and appreciate rather than to instruct.

Arithmetic is a field where the home can be very helpful to the child. The main cause of children's struggle with arithmetic is that schools have tried to teach them the tricks before they have understanding of the numbers they are dealing with and before they see the use of what they are learning. The best progressive schools try to avoid this, but tradition and outside pressures, or fear of them, result in teachers tending still to push arithmetic faster than many children can really digest it. The more the home can build up a foundation of experience and understanding the better the school can do its job.

When I say build up a foundation, I do not mean make up problems and push or drill the child. That's what must scrupulously be avoided. What the children need is experience with reality—with things and real situations that involve the *need* for arithmetic.

Little children usually love to count. Don't try to get them to count beyond their understanding of real things. They can count forks and knives and spoons for setting the table, or number of cars in a toy train, or their clothes, or anything else that is real. And the family situation, if the child is an active part of it, calls for many little additions and subtractions. "One more person is coming to dinner—now how many places do we need at the table?" or "Daddy isn't coming home

What Is Progressive Education?

tonight, so we need one less place. How many do we need?" Never force such things, but play with them and praise successful efforts.

Children should get allowances as soon as they can spend money. And that is before they go to school. Let them count their pennies and plan the use of them and see how many they will have left if they spend some. As the children get older, their allowances and earnings will increase. Help them to plan their spendings and savings and to count the results. Let them make change when you pay them.

As a child learns to deal with numbers, share your household problems with him. Did the grocer overcharge you? Or did you get the right change? Whenever possible let the child do the buying and account for the money you gave him. Again, don't force this; do it in so far as the child enjoys the responsibility.

Older children—from eight or nine on, anyway—should partake in family planning about what things can be afforded, and how they can be saved for. This is not just good background for arithmetic, but good training in responsibility and financial judgment; it can be invaluable in later life. Children can begin fairly soon to plan and help buy their clothes, and if they know what part of the family budget is for their clothes they can learn a great deal in helping to spend it. If they spend unwisely, they'll soon learn by their mistakes. They must have some freedom or the whole enterprise will lack sincerity and do more harm than good. Advice and warnings are all right, if they don't become equivalent to commands and the child is really free to reject them.

Last summer I came to know a little family where

"What Can I Do for My Child?"

the father had stopped earning for a year to get the technical training he needed for advancement. It was a family enterprise, carefully planned by all in advance. They had saved ahead for it, but their savings were meager. So the wife earned money by taking in type-writing jobs, and the eleven-year-old daughter earned enough money baby sitting to buy her school clothes for the next year. That child participated in the family venture. She not only learned arithmetic but learned responsibility and co-operation.

Arithmetic, however, is not just counting and money. Measuring is an important part. Helping in the kitchen, children can soon learn the kitchen measures. Helping on any household repairs, or the planning of any article of clothing, can involve measuring. Let the child measure whenever possible, and if you have to check his measurement, praise him for getting it so nearly right, if you sincerely can, rather than criticizing him for his inaccuracy. Yet, show the need for accuracy by the humorous results that would come from some mistakes.

An automobile trip can be a source for much real arithmetic. Twelve-year-old Loraine went on a cross-country vacation trip with her family. They planned the trip together beforehand and studied maps. Loraine wanted to remember the places they saw, so, besides writing her diary, she kept account of miles between important cities and the number of gallons of gasoline used, as well as expenses en route. All through the trip she served as family accountant. She learned simple bookkeeping, practiced her arithmetic, felt joint responsibility for the family's expenses, got clear ideas of

What Is Progressive Education?

distance, and increased her knowledge of geography, all at the same time.

We adults use numbers and measures, sizes and shapes and quantities, so continuously that we are hardly aware that we are doing it. If we will become conscious of this and share it with our children and let them help to work out our real problems, and if we will play with these ideas with them, their understanding of arithmetic will grow by leaps and bounds.

Let me repeat the warning, however: If we make such things irksome instead of fun, if we discourage the child by problems that are too hard or by criticism or ridicule, we will do far more harm than good. The children must know that we are not *pushing* them, urging them, trying to force their growth, unduly concerned with their skill. And they won't know this if our feeling is not genuine.

It is not only in the three Rs that we can help children develop the background for their school work. We can be at least as helpful in regard to science and the social studies. If we take an interest in nature and go on trips to the park or zoo or woods or meadows or seashore or river bank with the children, we have a base. If we have a lively curiosity about the things we see and share it with the children and look up with them the things we don't know, the attitude will be contagious, and their love of nature and their understanding of it will grow.

Children ask thousands of questions. These are the foundation of scientific knowledge. When we give glib answers, there is little value; but when we try to help the child find the answer, or give him a fuller understanding—by comparisons with things he knows, for ex-

ample—we encourage further thought and wonder. Our answers should always be honest, and we should be frank in admitting our ignorance. "I never thought about that. We'll have to find out." Such a statement, followed by a real search for the answer (as soon as we can find time), is sound education in science.

Every home should have a good children's encyclopedia, such as *The World Book* or *Britannica Junior*, or, for older children, *Compton's*. It should be selected with care, not as a result of high pressure salesmanship. The public library can give good advice as to which are the approved sets; the American Library Association publishes a list, for librarians, of the sets that have been carefully studied by experts and recommended for their accuracy and completeness.

Many a home that affords a radio or television set thinks it can't afford a less costly children's encyclopedia. But it is at least as important an avenue into the world, calls forth effort on the part of the child to get information when *he* needs it, and will be a source of education to the whole family. I have mentioned it in connection with science, but it is equally useful for the social studies.

The social studies include both history and geography, plus some understanding of government, and rudimentary economics. All through the school grades and high school, children do work in this field; and all the way along parents can help.

One home that I have known for many years, and where I have watched the six children grow from babyhood to the finest kind of young manhood and womanhood, has been a model for me of what parents can do

What Is Progressive Education?

in making the whole world, past and present, meaningful.

The parents have taken the children on excursions—short or long, on foot or in an old Ford, or, when they got more prosperous, in a station wagon—ever since the children were born. They have had people in their home from various parts of the world, and the children have taken part in talking with them about their countries. On trips or with visitors, conversation is continually about people and places and how they got to be what they are.

The dining room walls are covered with large maps including one of each continent. Whenever a place is mentioned at the table, in reading the morning paper, or on a radio broadcast, it is located on the maps. When the children don't know much about the place, one or another member of the family gets out a volume of a children's encyclopedia, or some other book, and looks it up.

The children bring home from school the new knowledge they have gained and their new interests. The whole family discusses these and adds to them.

The mother is an active member of the League of Women Voters. Both she and her husband are keenly interested in local, national, and world problems, and keep well informed. These interests have been shared with the children and have been centers of family conversation from the time the children could begin to understand.

The movies they see, the radio programs they listen to, the books they read together, include things that will help them look out at the world. I don't mean to imply that nothing is said or seen or heard just for fun.

"What Can I Do for My Child?"

Of course there is plenty of that; it, too, has value. But there is a goodly amount of the more broadly educative influence; not enough to be boring, but enough to quicken the interest and widen the horizons as well.

One can overdo the "educative." A small boy, whose father was a scientist, asked his mother a question requiring a scientific explanation. She said, "You should ask your father." He replied, "I don't want to know *that* much about it!"

If a youngster feels that when he wants a simple answer to a question, he gets, instead, a learned treatise, he'll be careful not to ask. All the way through, parents have to be sensitive to the response of the children. The home is not the school, and certainly not the traditional school that tries to force learning on the child. The home's function is to stimulate interest, share intellectual adventure, provide opportunities for experience. Above all, it must avoid forcing or boring the child and giving him a distaste for learning.

Right here I want to insert a few remarks in regard to parents' relation to homework assignments. Progressive elementary schools rarely give such assignments in the form of lessons to be done at home. This is true for several reasons. For one thing, the teacher wants to supervise the child's study, give him the right kind of help when he needs it, help him to see the relation of what he is studying to his own needs. Second, conditions for study are not good in many homes; there are distractions and interruptions and the necessary references are not always available. Third, homework is entirely unnecessary. Children in progressive schools that assign no formal homework do at least as well in standardized tests and in later success in higher schools

What Is Progressive Education?

as do those who have had regular homework assignments.

But there are two other, more important reasons. Progressive schools do not want to interfere with family life and activities. The sort of family experience we have been discussing is impeded if the child's time is occupied with formal home assignments and the parents are in the situation of having to "discipline" the child to do his homework. And the school wants the child to use out-of-school time for gaining experience—for play, outdoors and indoors, for developing hobbies and for explorations. The only kind of "homework" assigned by a really progressive teacher is the search for information and experience, activity in which the family can often join.

High schools, however, even when otherwise reasonably progressive, still often do assign definite home study. Parents then feel responsible for enforcing the homework. One of my daughters was not conscientious about this and, in spite of high intelligence, was getting low grades in high school subjects. Her mother and I insisted on her going to her room and studying each evening, but found that she often read an interesting book or listened to the radio instead. There were unhappy scenes about the situation, but they brought no good results.

One Sunday, my wife and I spent the afternoon with friends. Our host was an eminent professor of biology (Frank Lilly), himself the father of several children a little older than ours. He asked about our children and I told him of our worry about Margaret's attitude toward homework assignments, and school work generally. He said, "Carleton, stop worrying about it. Each

of my daughters went through the same thing during adolescence. Let her alone. She's growing into young womanhood, and her mind and body are making adjustments. She'll come out all right if you just keep hands off."

My wife and I discussed this on our way home and decided to follow his advice. We had a talk with Margaret that evening, telling her frankly of our discussion with our host, and then said, "So we have decided not to bother you any more about your homework. You're old enough and intelligent enough to regulate your own life. This doesn't mean we're washing our hands of you. We'll sympathize if you fail, and rejoice when you succeed. We'll always be really interested, and you know we always love you dearly. We'll back you and understand, but we won't urge or push you, nor even advise you unless you really want advice. You're on your own!"

She heaved a great sigh of relief and appreciation. We lived up to our bargain. To our amazement the plan worked. Margaret took hold, and her grades at school were good from that day forward. Later she was in the honors seminar at the university.

Parents cannot necessarily expect such successful results. They must be prepared (as we were) for possible continued low grades or even temporary failures, and still keep hands off. They should, of course, be interested, sympathetic, encouraging, but not even inwardly worried or nagging. The pressure hadn't worked; so there is no more loss academically if the removal of pressure doesn't work either. But there is a great gain in the child's sense of responsibility, and in the child's chance to learn by his or her mistakes. As long as we

What Is Progressive Education?

make the responsibility partly ours, the child will feel no such need for analyzing the situation and modifying his or her behavior to meet it.

When we push, it is natural for a child to resist. When we take responsibility, the child will not. I can't repeat too often that our job is setting the stage, through providing educative experience, giving encouragement, and sharing our children's experience, with love and understanding and real interest; and letting them share ours. The rest is up to the youngsters themselves. Prepare the soil; see that there is nourishment and moisture and sunshine. But don't try to force growth. Growth is inherent and natural where there is life.

Now let us return to one further aspect of the home's relation to the social studies. As children reach the upper grades and junior and senior high school, they will be dealing with many controversial current issues, if the school is at all progressive. They will be thinking about problems that beset our country and the world today. They will be studying both sides of questions, like management and labor, government ownership and control versus "free enterprise," competition versus co-operation, war and peace, the United Nations, Russia and communism.

If they are doing any thinking about these problems they will come out with ideas of their own that do not always reflect the ideas of their parents—or teachers. Listen to their ideas with interest and appreciate their ability to wrestle with such problems. Of course some of their ideas will be half-baked—so were ours at their age (maybe some still are!). But the ability to think for themselves, the interest in attacking the problems, are the valuable things we want to see develop. They'll

change their views a dozen times; their momentary conclusions are unimportant.

I must confess that I found it hard to practice what I preach in this regard. When my son, in late adolescence, and in his early college years, held forth on views with which I disagreed, I argued back, hard. And it seemed to me that he lacked respect for opinions of mine which were the result of much longer thought and experience than his. I see now that his lack of respect for my views was a direct reflection of my lack of respect for his. I should have shown, then, as I quite sincerely do now that he is grown to maturity, a respect for his interest, his earnestness, and his thought. After all, mere age does not always make us wise. And the fresh approach of youth to problems on which our ideas have crystallized is a wholesome thing. Too much respect for age stopped progress in China for many centuries. It is the fact that youth has new points of view that makes for progress.

Some of the prejudices that parents have are being exposed and analyzed in progressive schools. Prejudice against different races, different religions, different economic or political systems, different classes in society, exist among us all to a higher degree than we realize. We need to examine and eradicate our own prejudices, and to be glad that our sons and daughters are being educated to see more objectively, and to value more truly people and ideas to which we react emotionally. That sounds easy, but it is one of the hardest things we can do. Instead of being irritated by the more open-minded approach of our boys and girls, we should try, as best we can, to learn from it.

I have discussed the way we can help our children

What Is Progressive Education?

in reading, writing, arithmetic, science, and the social studies. The same principles apply to the arts—music, literature, the dance, drama, painting, and modeling. Our responsibility as parents is to give increased opportunities in these fields, to develop our own understanding of them and to be sincerely interested in whatever our youngsters are doing in the way of creative or appreciative participation in the arts.

Let us turn now, more briefly, to our relations with teachers and the schools.

In our children's earlier years especially—before high school—we should know their teachers. It is desirable, too, when the children are in high school; but in high school it is more difficult. There are a number of different teachers each day, and each of them deals with a much larger number of different children each day than do elementary teachers. And because our children are rightly freeing themselves from us during adolescence, it is less urgent that we work closely with their high school teachers.

In nursery school, kindergarten, and the elementary grades, however, the education of our children is an intimately co-operative enterprise in which teachers and parents are partners. We, as parents, can shed light on our children, light that the teacher needs if he or she is to guide them wisely, fit their school life to their individual needs, and build on their individual experience. The teacher, in turn, can shed light on our problems. Our children, in the school situation, and seen in the perspective of successive classes handled by the teacher, show characteristics that we do not see at home. We can learn much about our own children from their teachers.

"What Can I Do for My Child?"

To establish this co-operative relationship, several things are necessary. First, there must be friendly rapport and mutual respect between teachers and parents. If either is defensive or critical this rapport is hard to establish. Each must recognize that the other is both fallible, being human, and sincerely interested in the best possible development of the child. Together, we can compensate for our failures and co-operate for the child's good.

Second, we need to understand what the teacher is trying to do for our child; what are the aims and what are the methods being used to achieve these aims. Knowing these, our home co-operation will be intelligent and effective.

Third, when our children criticize their teachers at home, we should not assume that the teacher is wrong, nor should we take the stand that the teacher is always right. Our attitude should be one of sympathetic listening to the child, then helping him to see the teacher's side as far as possible, helping him to learn tolerance and understanding even when there are real mistakes. Yet the child must feel that he has an ally in his parents when he has actually been wronged, and that they will try to help him in his difficulty.

If the problem is serious, we should go to the teacher, without defensiveness, for his or her interpretation of the incident, and try to work out, constructively and co-operatively, a fair solution. If we attack, the teacher will automatically defend. But if we are sympathetic and open-minded, the teacher will be inclined to be equally so. We should, therefore, avoid going to the teacher when we are indignant and emotionally wrought up about something he or she seems to have done to

What Is Progressive Education?

our child. Wait till we cool down and can handle the problem objectively. If we have previously established friendly and understanding relations with the teacher, it will be much easier to iron out the rough spots when our child has a grievance.

Our relations with the school include more than co-operation with our children's teachers. The school as a whole affects the teacher and our children. We should visit it and try to understand it. We should be active in the parent-teacher association. We should combine with other parents in trying to see that the school has adequate equipment, so that the teachers can do their work efficiently, and that the building is attractive and hygienic and in good repair. And we should certainly work untiringly to see that classes are not so large that the teacher cannot know each child and work for his best growth. The more classes exceed thirty pupils, the more difficult it is for the teacher to do what should be done for each child.

As citizens, we need to be active in support of good schools. The quality of the members of the board of education is the most important responsibility of parents as citizens. We tend to be lax, or to feel futile, in regard to this vital point. But if we organize with other parents and are sufficiently active and intelligent, we can control this key situation. Where the school board is elected we can caucus and nominate, and by sufficient organization, elect the best and most farseeing of our fellow citizens to the board. Where the board is appointed, we can bring sufficiently strong pressure on the mayor or other appointing authority to ensure the appointment of the same kind of citizen. We have the power, but rarely use it efficiently. Yet what is more important to us than

"What Can I Do for My Child?"

the best possible education for our children? And how can we assure this if we are lax or futile in regard to the membership of the board of education that controls the schools?

As citizens, too, we need to see that the schools are adequately financed. Taxes are high and we don't like them. But when we are spending, as a nation, more for liquor and tobacco than for the schools, it is absurd to say that we cannot afford a good education for our children.

Those parents who send their children to private and church schools have responsibility for the public schools as well. The vast majority of future voters, and those with whom one's children will have to work as they grow up, are being educated in the public schools. It is incredibly shortsighted to assume that the education of all these doesn't matter as long as one's own children are well educated in a private institution.

Over forty years ago a group of fathers met in the home of one of them in Winnetka. They were graduates of eastern colleges and accustomed to private preparatory schools. The meeting was for the purpose of starting a local private school. One of them rose in the meeting and said, "Why don't we make our public schools so good that we'll be proud to send our children to them?" At first he was ruled out of order. That was not the purpose for which the meeting was called. But he got enough support so that a second meeting, with both mothers and fathers, was called. The outcome was an agreement that if the man who made the proposal would run, successfully, for the board of education, the others would back him. He agreed, pro-

What Is Progressive Education?

vided some of the others would become members of the board with him.

Within three years the board was in the hands of a group of the most farseeing citizens of the community, determined to make the Winnetka schools as good as they could be made. They became the first progressive public schools of the century and are known throughout the world for the effectiveness of their education. Just this year, two of the thirty-two Rhodes scholars from the United States were chosen from graduates of the public schools of this one small town.

It is only by organizing that we parents can be effective in getting good schools for our children. Citizen organizations, such as the Public Education Association in New York, or the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools in various parts of the country, can, if actively supported by all intelligent parents, do wonders in getting the right kind of legislation to make good public schools possible. It is our responsibility as parents and citizens to organize or work with organizations of this kind.

If we want progressive education for our children, we have to work for it. By getting progressive schools and by co-operating with them we can effectively help our boys and girls to develop into happy, well-adjusted, well-educated persons, and responsible and contributing members of a democratic society.

Chapter 10

Contrasts with Traditional Education

IN SUMMARIZING this informal little book, it may be helpful if we point up what we have said about progressive education by comparing it with the traditional. But first a word of caution. Teachers and schools cannot be placed sharply in one group or the other. Very few progressive teachers do not carry over some of the traditional ideas and practices of their own early training, and few do not yield to what too many parents, reflecting *their* early training, expect of them. And very few traditional teachers do not show the influence of scientific research and the broader objectives of progressive education. Teachers shade from mainly traditional to mainly progressive, and a majority of teachers come near the middle. But in regard to purposes and methods, there are sharp contrasts between the traditional and the progressive types of education.

1. *Physical health and bodily development*

In Greek and Roman education, the idea of a healthy mind in a healthy body was fully recognized as a goal in education. In the Middle Ages, however, the body was considered as the source of sin and its development

What Is Progressive Education?

was neglected. Education became purely intellectual and religious. This medieval attitude carried on in traditional education almost to the beginning of this century; health and physical education had a hard battle to get into the school program. And even now, in traditional schools, they have their place only on the side lines. A period may be given to gymnasium, with emphasis on formal gymnastics, and a place is usually given in the program for the study of physiology and hygiene as a separate subject. The feeling of parents, educated in traditional schools, still is that the physical education of the children is not a main function of the school. This was clearly shown during the depression. At that time when school costs were being attacked and curtailed, there was no move to drop teachers of grammar or Latin or geometry but many schools dropped physical education teachers and school nurses.

Progressive education sees the body, emotions and mind as parts of the whole child, continuously influencing each other. The physical health of the child is therefore considered an essential part of his education. It is not just a separate "subject," or a matter of a "gym period." It is interwoven through the whole school program. Arithmetic may deal with the increasing height and weight of the children in the room, or with absences and lost time due to colds, or with statistics of accidents. Science will include physiology and prevention of contagion. Social studies will include the work of the city and state in public health and safety, and the fascinating story of the World Health Organization of the United Nations. Art will be used in making health and safety posters. The classroom teacher will be alert to help the children develop sound habits

Contrasts with Traditional Education

of hygiene and safety. There will, of course, always be healthy outdoor games, under trained supervision, and indoor gymnasiums for indoor sports, and games, folk dancing, and special exercises for children with physical defects.

2. *Emotional adjustment*

It is a strange holdover of our own traditional education that most of us parents in thinking of the functions of school don't recognize what we know so well in life, that a person's emotional adjustment, his happiness, his ability to meet all kinds of situations with balance and self-control, his ability to get along well with all sorts of people, that these are the most important things for our children to achieve.

The traditional school largely neglects this vital aspect of education. Indeed, it does some things that go directly against good emotional development. We have seen, earlier, that self-expression, security, the sense of being loved, appreciated, and successful, and the feeling of being a real part of a group and of society through working with others toward common goals ("social integration") are the essential needs of all people. Yet the traditional school, with its formal, set assignments and its "discipline" blocks self-expression. By its ignoring of differences in the abilities and experience and maturity of the children, giving all the same assignment, and punishing those who fail to do it well by low marks, disapproval, and sometimes "failure," the traditional school undermines security and often discourages children instead of encouraging them. And by not allowing communication and mutual help among the children, it

What Is Progressive Education?

prevents social integration and prohibits practice in co-operative work toward common ends.

In contrast, the base of progressive education is satisfaction of these fundamental needs. It recognizes that a maladjusted person is unhappy, is a failure as a husband or wife or parent, does not get along in business or industry, and is a poor citizen. One who is not at peace with himself, who is frustrated and unhappy, neither lives successfully nor contributes his part to the well-being of society. One who is seriously maladjusted may become delinquent; such persons fill our prisons. Or he may become insane; one person out of every twenty to twenty-five in the United States spends part of his life in a hospital or sanitarium for the mentally ill.

So helping children to develop good mental health, helping them to achieve inner poise, self-confidence, happiness, and ability to work and play successfully with others, is a fundamental purpose of progressive education. The atmosphere of the classroom, the attitudes and insight of the teacher, the methods of instruction, and the nature of the experiences provided for the children, are all geared to this purpose. This is perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of progressive education.

3. *The arts*

Music and drawing had an even harder time getting into the traditional school than physical education. They did squeeze in, but have never become an important part of traditional education. Our largest city cut out all special teachers and supervisors of music and art in the elementary schools during the depression and has never, even with its present progressive program,

Contrasts with Traditional Education

put them back in. (In the central offices of those schools, however, the need for art and music is recognized, and admirable bulletins have been prepared for the use of classroom teachers.)

When music and art are taught in traditional schools, they tend to be formal and joyless, and to leave little room for creativity or self-expression. They are just "lessons."

Progressive schools, on the contrary, are alive with the singing of folk songs and good music, with "rhythm bands" for little children (beating time on sticks and cymbals and triangles), and orchestras and bands for older children. They are colorful with the original painting of the youngsters, with murals and room decorations, and scenery painted for dramatics. They were sometimes messy with clay and scraps of wood used in making things—puppets, animals, doll furniture, or larger constructions. There is dancing—folk dances, square dances, rhythms. There are "creative dramatics"—plays made up by the children themselves, the parts spoken spontaneously, not memorized. And there is "creative writing"—original stories and poems, often "published" in a fully illustrated room or school magazine or newspaper.

4. *Knowledge and skill*

The imparting of knowledge of history, geography, science, and so on, and the development of skill in reading, arithmetic, and mathematics, writing and spelling—these are the center of traditional education. Although most of the school time and the teacher's efforts are spent on these, the results have never been satisfactory. As we have seen, studies of children's achievements in

What Is Progressive Education?

these fields for the last hundred years in the United States have shown an appalling lack of real mastery on the part of many of the children, right down the generations. College teachers, even when the select few went to college, have persistently complained of the poor preparation given to many in the high schools. The high schools, even when a much smaller percentage of children got into them, have complained more bitterly of the poor job done by the elementary schools. And upper grade teachers have complained that the children did not get a good foundation in the lower grades.

Recently this complaint has been turned against progressive education. *It* is to blame for all the ills. A friend of mine, lately retired as a professor at Princeton, used to tell me how terrible the new generation was in English—all because of progressive education. It never occurred to him that most of his students came from traditional schools. Nor did he ever bother to make any real study of the actual records, through the generations, of Princeton freshmen. Neither did he take any account of the fact that children of the masses, rather than the select few, are now entering our colleges.

Progressive education considers knowledge and skill important. But it tries to give children the knowledge and skill they will really use in some manner and to help them learn these in a way that will result in their applying them to life situations. It emphasizes understanding and avoids mere drill not based on understanding and experience. Facts are necessary but only have meaning as they are related to life, and it is more important to know how to find facts when one needs them than to cram the memory with a great number of them.

Contrasts with Traditional Education

As we have seen, progressive education tries to apply what the sciences, and especially psychology, have shown to be the most efficient ways of learning, basing it on experience, on interest, and the relation of the different parts of learning to each other.

That the achievement of children from progressive schools isn't very much better on traditional tests than the achievement of those in traditional schools is due partly to two things: First, most schools, even when trying to be progressive, don't fully follow the paths shown by science. They don't, for example, really, in most cases, fit each child's school work to his own stage of development and base it on his own experience. And they don't fully eliminate those parts of traditional school subjects that have no meaning or use for many of the children. In the second place, the tests used have been tests based on the traditional school courses, and include isolated facts, useless arithmetic examples, and items involving more memory than understanding.

In spite of these things, the more progressive the schools are the better the children show up even on traditional tests and examinations.

While the traditional school ignores the attitudes of the children toward learning and often produces a dislike of school or of certain school subjects, the progressive school is deeply concerned with the attitudes the children develop. It tries to stimulate an eagerness to learn that will continue after the children leave school. In this, it has had a good deal of success.

5. *Discipline*

The traditional school prides itself on its "discipline" and teachers are judged by their ability to "keep disci-

What Is Progressive Education?

pline." But the discipline usually means merely that children sit still, keep quiet, and do as they are told, when the teacher has an eye on them. The most common breach of discipline is communicating with one's classmates, whispering or passing notes. One of the principal functions of a school is to train people to communicate effectively with each other; but in the traditional school the children must only communicate by writing or saying what the teacher wants them to write or say, just when the teacher tells them to, in just the way the teacher says.

In the progressive school the need for obedience, on occasion, is recognized and, if necessary, enforced by a teacher who is in charge. But the real stress is on helping children to see the need for self-discipline, a discipline that operates when they are not being watched. The rules of behavior are worked out, under the teacher's guidance, by the children themselves, even though the teacher enforces them. The atmosphere of the room is friendly and co-operative. Children are encouraged to help each other and share each other's interests. The room often seems noisy to an outsider, as does a gathering of adults when they are working together. There is much freedom. Yet when the teacher or another child is speaking to the whole group, there is considerate silence and listening, followed by well-ordered discussion. When the class needs a time of quiet study, the room is like a well-conducted public library. The children may go quietly to get a book, or go to the toilet, or show something interesting to each other, or ask someone a question, as long as they do not disturb the rest.

The child who persistently disturbs others, shows off,

Contrasts with Traditional Education

bullies, teases, or otherwise makes a nuisance of himself, may have to be dealt with, for the moment, as in a traditional school, for the sake of protecting the rest of the class. But the teacher knows that merely suppressing him is no cure; it is a temporary expedient. He is regarded, in the long run, as a patient rather than a culprit. And he, like the too good, always docile child, is studied, with the help of his parents and sometimes that of a psychologist or psychiatrist, to see what needs he is seeking to satisfy and how these can be satisfied in a manner that is acceptable. He isn't "cured" until he has found ways of adjusting to life that are satisfactory both to himself and to others.

6. *Character*

Schools have always had the education of character as an avowed objective. Traditionally, however, this has meant insistence on obedience and moral behavior. Obedience has been enforced by praise and reproof, or by rewards and punishments. When consistent, this usually works while the parent or teacher or other authority is present or likely to discover any disobedience. Moral behavior, or doing what the people around you think it is right for you to do, is, traditionally, largely the result of obedience, both to parents and teachers and to God's commands as interpreted by parents, teachers, and religious authority.

Character, as seen by progressive teachers, includes much more than this. To have real character a person must be able to look ahead. He must be able to weigh values. He must see that if he does something which he feels like doing right now, it may keep him from doing something else which, in the future, he would really

What Is Progressive Education?

rather do. And he must see himself as part of a group, and that group as part of a larger society. He must realize that the things he wants in life for himself can, in the long run, only be had if they fit in with what all people want. So he has to extend himself and his personal desires to include others. This extension has to be to larger and larger circles—from self to family, to classmates and playmates, to school, to community, to country, and finally to people everywhere.

But character involves more than an intellectual realization that one's own good is tied up with the good of others. It must be based on a feeling of warmth and friendliness for others, a real desire for their happiness and well-being.

To bring about this farsightedness and social-mindedness is a long and continuous process of education; it is not mere enforcement of obedience. And with it must go self-discipline—the will, and the ability, and the habit of acting in accordance with this deeper and truer insight.

The progressive school, therefore, tries to give experiences from the earliest to the latest years that will help children develop this kind of character. Without freedom of action they cannot learn from their mistakes and cannot develop true self-discipline. Without guidance from a wise teacher, they may not successfully interpret their experience. Without knowledge, they will not see their dependence on the larger society of which they are part. Without emotional satisfaction and adjustment, they block themselves and interfere with others.

The whole program of progressive education is therefore directed toward the development of character.

7. *Citizenship*

Citizenship is a specialized application of character to one's responsibilities in the community, the nation, and the world. No school—traditional or progressive—fails to admit the importance of helping boys and girls to grow up into good citizens. But the means used are quite different in the two types of school.

In the traditional school there is no *practice* of citizenship. There are lessons in American history and lessons in civics. But in the daily life of the school, the students are expected to be obedient subjects, not participating citizens. Even in semitraditional high schools that have "student councils" and "student governments," most students participate only by electing representatives, and the representatives can only act on certain out-of-class student activities.

But the progressive school makes citizenship a part of the lives of the children from the beginning. It is organized as democracy, with respect for the rights, the opinions, the differences, of every child, and with cooperative planning and work made the core of the daily activities. Children practice democracy from the earliest grades throughout their schooling.

They study history, geography, political science, and economics, pulled together in the social studies. This work is focused on the problems with which mankind is beset. Their daily experience in meeting immediate problems together is extended to an understanding of the problems of the larger society and how, as citizens of the larger society, they can bring their increasing knowledge and understanding to bear on these problems. They are encouraged to think for themselves.

What Is Progressive Education?

They are trained to look beneath propaganda, prejudices, and tradition, for facts. Initiative and originality are given scope; but these are disciplined by the use of scientific thinking—honest examination of facts, open-mindedness, logical reasoning. Experimentation in the solution of group problems in the democratic life of the school serves as a base for looking at the larger, but related problems of adult society.

The children learn citizenship by the continuous practice of it as citizens of a school democracy.

These seven contrasts between traditional education and progressive education are not the whole story. But they are fair samples of the two major differences between the two types of education.

First, traditional education is mainly concerned with imparting knowledge and skill, and securing obedient behavior. Progressive education has wider purposes. It is concerned with the *whole* child as an individual and as an inseparable part of society.

Second, traditional education uses methods that largely ignore what science has discovered about how children learn and about their differences, while progressive education tries to apply the findings of science.

Both because of its broader purposes and its more scientific practices, the progressive school works closely with the parents and the community.

It has not yet gone far enough in helping parents and community to understand what it is trying to do; so it is criticized by many. The main cause of criticism is lack of knowledge of what progressive education really is, and of the results it achieves.

Actually, as we have seen, practically every scientific

Contrasts with Traditional Education

measurement of results shows that progressive education is progressing toward the successful accomplishment of its broad aims. It succeeds at least as well as traditional education, and often better, in the more limited purposes of imparting knowledge and skill. And it succeeds very much better in helping our boys and girls to grow up as we parents want them to grow—into happy, healthy, well-adjusted men and women, with knowledge and understanding, with character, with initiative, and with the desire and the ability to work for the good of their fellow men.

Progressive education, in summary, is simply the ongoing effort to apply the continually increasing findings of science toward helping children and youth to grow up in accordance with the democratic ideal—the fullest possible development of each person's capacities, both as an individual and as a responsible participant in a democratic society.

Some of those who have read this book may want to know more about progressive education. They will find a much fuller discussion of the reasons for it, and the ways it is put into practice in the schools, in the author's *A Living Philosophy of Education*, published by the John Day Company.



he was superintendent of schools in a suburb of Chicago.

Dr. Washburne has been active in the American Educational Research Association and the National Society for the Study of Education. For four years he was president of the Progressive Education Association in the United States and he is now international president of the New Education Fellowship, with branches in more than thirty countries.

Thus, if anyone knows what "modern" or "progressive" education really is, Dr. Washburne ought to. He has written here the book which that father asked for. It shows clearly how the new education differs from the old, discusses discipline and authority, moral and religious education, the common concern of home, church, community, and school in developing the child. It describes a good progressive school, tells of the results obtained by progressive education, and finally asks this question: "Why all the shouting? What is the reason for all the criticism one hears or reads, who are the critics, and what is the basis of their criticisms?"

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